



STUDI E TESTI TARDOANTICI  
PROFANE AND CHRISTIAN CULTURE  
IN LATE ANTIQVITY

13

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STUDI E TESTI TARDOANTICI  
PROFANE AND CHRISTIAN CULTURE  
IN LATE ANTIQVITY

Culture and Literature  
in Latin Late Antiquity.  
Continuities and  
Discontinuities

edited by

Paola Francesca MORETTI

Roberta RICCI

Chiara TORRE



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## PREFACE

This volume originated within the framework of a tradition of research on Late Antiquity, which is well-established at the Università degli Studi of Milan. During the years 2010 to 2013, we had the opportunity to collaborate on a national research project on Latin Late Antiquity (PRIN 2009), directed by Franca Ela Consolino (Università degli Studi, L'Aquila). Within this project, the Milanese research unit focused on 'Form and content: changing patterns of thought, language and style in late Latin tradition (fourth–sixth cent. AD)'.

On 27–28 May 2013, the International Conference 'Trasformazione e trasmissione dei modelli culturali e letterari nella tarda antichità latina' took place in Milan. Scholars with whom we wished to share and discuss the outcome of our research were invited to take part in the conference. Some of the papers collected here are revised versions of the papers which were delivered on that occasion, whereas others are totally new.

In recent decades, many valuable works have been published on Late Antiquity as an age when intellectual and spiritual horizons underwent significant changes in the Roman world, mostly due to Christianization. The aim of this volume is to dwell on some of the ways in which the literary production was affected by – and reacted to – these changes, which admittedly cannot be fully interpreted by adopting simplistic patterns, such as that of the contrast of pagan vs. Christian elements, or changing contents vs. unchanging formal structures. We have investigated some aspects of the literary area of 'secularity'<sup>1</sup> within which no

<sup>1</sup> Robert A. Markus, *The End of Ancient Christianity*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1990.

clear-cut dichotomy can be established between Christian and pagan (or profane) authors. As a matter of fact, school played a key role in shaping the late ancient ‘secular’ culture: a cultured elite, somewhat regardless of their religious beliefs – ‘committed Pagans’ like Symmachus or Ammianus; ‘committed Christians’ like Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine, etc.; ‘center Christians’ like Ausonius; ‘center Pagans’ (as Alan Cameron calls them in his recent book<sup>2</sup>) – attended the same schools and shared a *paideia* shaped by their reading of classical texts and their commenting on them. The third section of this volume (*The Transmission of the Cultural Heritage: School, Texts, and Paratexts*) sheds most light on some concrete aspects of this education, focusing on the reading and exegesis of ‘cult’ texts and authors, from the *Disticha Catonis* to Horace and Vergil. Perhaps we might say that this is the field in which continuity appears to dwell consistently.

A much more complex intertwining of continuity and discontinuity, tradition and innovation is outlined in the papers of the first two sections (*The Transformation of the Cultural Heritage: Poetry; The Transformation of the Cultural Heritage: Prose*). A collection of case studies, ranging from the fourth to the seventh centuries AD, is arranged in rough chronological order and divided according to a formal criterion (poetry vs. prose). Here, many specific texts or issues deserving deeper insight are dealt with from a unitary perspective, viewing religious and profane literary works as part of the same general transformation process. From Ausonius to Fulgentius, a multifaceted reshaping of cultural and literary patterns emerges, in which nuances and blending largely predominate, involving words, single works, and literary and sub-literary genres (historiography; elegiac poetry; epistolography; rhetoric; *tituli historiarum*). Within this wider dynamic framework we should also consider those changes explicitly and peculiarly linked to Christianization, among which the attempts – either successful or failed – to Christianize literary genres, and the ‘reinvention’ of an ancient author as a ‘literary character’ (Seneca in the pseudo-epigraph correspondence with Paul) might perhaps be viewed as extreme examples.

<sup>2</sup> *The Last Pagans of Rome*, University Press, Oxford 2011.



PREFACE

We wish to thank Franca Ela Consolino and Carla Lo Cicero, the general editors of the series ‘Studi e testi tardoantichi’, for guiding, supporting and encouraging us with care, kindness and endless patience in all the steps that have led to the publication of this volume.

Paola F. MORETTI  
Roberta RICCI  
Chiara TORRE

Milano, luglio 2015



SECTION I

THE TRANSFORMATION  
OF THE CULTURAL HERITAGE:  
POETRY



BRUNELLA MORONI

## GLI EPIGRAMMI DI AUSONIO PER LE FONTI DEL DANUBIO. TRADIZIONE LETTERARIA E ARTE FIGURATIVA

Tra gli epigrammi di Ausonio due sono dedicati al medesimo soggetto, le fonti del Danubio, che recano lo stesso titolo (*Ad fontem Danuvii iussu Valentiniani Augusti*):<sup>1</sup>

(Auson. *epigr.* 3)

- Illyricis regnator aquis, tibi, Nile, secundus  
Danuvius laetum profero fonte caput.  
Salvere Augustos iubeo, natumque patremque  
5 armiferis alvi quos ego Pannoniis.  
Nuntius Euxino iam nunc volo currere ponto  
ut sciat hoc superum cura secunda Valens  
caede, fuga, flammis stratos periisse Suebos  
nec Rhenum Gallis limitis esse loco.  
10 Quod si lege maris refluus mihi curreret amnis,  
huc possem victos inde referre Gothos.

(Auson. *epigr.* 4)

- Danuvius penitis caput occultatus in oris  
totus sub vestra iam dicione fluo:  
qua gelidum fontem mediis effundo Suebis,  
imperiis gravidas qua seco Pannonias,  
5 et qua dives aquis Scythico solvo ostia ponto  
omnia sub vestrum flumina mitto iugum.  
Augusto dabitur sed proxima palma Valenti:  
inveniet fontes hic quoque, Nile, tuos.

### 1. *Convenzioni letterarie e realtà storica*

Gli epigrammi, letti uno dopo l'altro, presentano una struttura anulare. L'immagine del Nilo, che apre il primo, chiude

<sup>1</sup> Il testo è citato secondo l'edizione Green 1991, pp. 66-67.

il secondo. All'interno, una serie di parallelismi ad antitesi: nel primo il Danubio *profert caput* (v. 2), nel secondo lo occulta (v. 1). Nel primo vorrebbe scorrere a ritroso (vv. 1-12); nel secondo la sua corrente attraversa dalla sorgente alla foce terre tutte romane (vv. 2-6); il Reno ed il Nilo rappresentano il nord e il sud; il Danubio è invece (e questa è la novità rispetto ai topoi consueti) il fiume che simboleggia l'unità delle due *partes*, entrambe sotto il dominio degli imperatori pannonici. Il tema è dunque l'unità d'origine e d'intenti di Valentiniano e Valente. Nel primo epigramma sono maggiormente in evidenza Valentiniano e Graziano (v. 4), nel secondo l'imperatore d'Oriente (v. 7).

Far pronunciare un discorso panegiristico al *deus loci* è abbastanza comune: nella *Consolatio ad Liviam* (vv. 209-213) il dio Tiberino assiste ai funerali di Druso e Marte pronuncia la sua *laudatio funebris*; il *deus Curtius* fa l'encomio di Domiziano in *Stat. silv.* I. 1. 66-83; sempre nelle *Silvae* (IV. 3. 67-94) il Volturino si rivolge all'imperatore; in Claudiano (*Olybr. Prob.* 209 ss.) ancora il dio Tiberino celebra il consolato dei due fratelli Anicii. Meno preciso è il confronto con Mart. x. 7: in questo caso il Tevere non indirizza il discorso all'imperatore, ma ad un altro dio fluviale, il Reno. Osserviamo in particolare un'analogia, anche formale, con il panegirico del 289 per Massimiano.<sup>2</sup> L'idea che il Reno non costituisca più un *limes* per la Gallia è connessa a quella della definitiva sconfitta dei barbari, rappresentata con un asindeto (*caede, fuga, flammis* in Ausonio; *proeliis, caedibus, ferro ignique* nel panegirico di Massimiano). Tale brevità riecheggia le formule delle iscrizioni trionfali e conduce ad esiti simili ai motivi propagandistici dell'arte figurativa contemporanea: ad esempio, il piatto di Ginevra, dove Valentiniano è rappresentato mentre calpesta le armi spezzate dei barbari sconfitti.<sup>3</sup>

La collocazione cronologica dei nostri epigrammi si intreccia in modo complesso con le datazioni altrettanto problematiche di altri carmi ausoniani (la *Mosella*, la *Bissula*, il *Gryphus ternarii*

<sup>2</sup> *Paneg.* 2 (X) 7. 3-6 (ed. Gallettier 1949): *Rhenum antea videbatur ipsa sic natura duxisse ut eo limite Romanae provinciae ab immanitate barbarorum vindicaretur[...]; tu autem, imperator invicte, feras illas indomitasque gentes vastatione, proeliis, caedibus, ferro ignique domuisti.*

<sup>3</sup> McCormack 1981, pp. 204-205.

*numeri*), con la datazione delle orazioni di Simmaco e con quella delle campagne militari di Valentiniano e Valente.<sup>4</sup>

Diversi topoi dei nostri epigrammi interessano particolarmente i *litterati* alla corte dei Valentiniani fra 368 e 370: mi sembra si possa confermare la proposta degli studiosi che li collocano non prima del 370. Innanzitutto, il motivo del fiume remoto raggiunto dalla conquista romana ricorre oltre che nella *Mosella* – la cui composizione è di questi stessi anni, salvo revisioni successive<sup>5</sup> –, nella seconda orazione in onore di Valentiniano I, databile al 370, dove Simmaco (2. 24) celebra in modo simile la campagna militare che aveva condotto l'imperatore sulle rive del Neckar.<sup>6</sup> Anche alla corte di Valente, Eutropio e Festo, che scrivono tra 369 e 370, si interessano di un fiume di frontiera, il Danubio: Eutropio rileva che nel 75 a.C. il proconsole Curione aveva sottomesso le popolazioni danubiane,<sup>7</sup> Festo specifica che egli era stato il primo dei Romani a raggiungerne il corso.<sup>8</sup>

Altri due temi hanno particolare rilievo fra 369 e 370: prima di tutto, il tema della *cura*. Nella prima orazione in onore di Valentiniano (del 369), Simmaco teorizzava che i due imperatori si dividessero paritariamente la *cura* delle due *partes imperii*,<sup>9</sup> forse pensando che una netta separazione delle sfere di influenza dei due principi avrebbe rafforzato l'asse Treviri-Roma piuttosto che l'asse Treviri-Costantinopoli, offrendo maggiori possibilità di influenza al senato di cui egli era il portavoce. Ausonio

<sup>4</sup> Bibliografia in Green 1991, pp. 379-338; Kay 2001, pp. 74-79; Drinkwater 1999, p. 443.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. *Mos.* 420-424 *Nec praemia in undis / sola, sed Augustae veniens quod moenibus urbis / spectavit iunctos natiq[ue] patrisq[ue] triumphos / hostibus exactis Nicrum super et Lupodunum / et fontem Latiis ignotum annalibus Histri*. Sulla composizione, Drinkwater 1999 e Cavarzere – Mondin 2003.

<sup>6</sup> *Ventilemus prisca monumenta, scrutemur annales: invenies vetustatem paene ignaram fluminum quae tenetis. Ipsi illi vates exoticis nominibus licenter ornati, cum ad Indum Gange nec Boristhenen Scythicum carmen extenderent, Nigrum parem maximis ignoratione siluerunt.*

<sup>7</sup> *vi. 2 Dardanos vicit et usque ad Danuvium penetravit.*

<sup>8</sup> *7. 5 Dardanos et Moesiacos Curio pro consule subegit et primus Romanorum ducum ad Danuvium usque pervenit.* Secondo Fede 2009, p. 372, in tutta la sezione sulla Mesia la precisione dei riferimenti alla geografia ed all'etnografia della provincia fa pensare che l'autore ne abbia notizie molto accurate in seguito alla spedizione di Valente contro i Goti.

<sup>9</sup> *Orat.* 1. 14. Cf. Pabst 1989, p. 215.

(*epigr.* 3. 7) invece definisce Valente *cura secunda deum*, riaffermando la preminenza di Valentiniano sul fratello. Il secondo tema si trova in *epigr.* 4. 4 *imperiis gravidas [...] Pannonias*. Il verso ricalca Verg. *Aen.* iv. 229-230 *gravidam imperiis Italiam*. Potrebbe però non trattarsi solo di una ripresa letteraria, ma di un'allusione alla futura nascita di Valentiniano II, che avvenne nell'estate del 371.<sup>10</sup>

Un dato più sicuro mi sembra indirizzare a questa data: se pure era improbabile che Valente intraprendesse una spedizione in Africa,<sup>11</sup> proprio in quell'anno la sua attenzione fu rivolta all'Egitto. Dopo essersi stabilito ad Antiochia per controllare meglio la frontiera orientale, tornò a Costantinopoli e fece dell'Egitto una diocesi a sé stante,<sup>12</sup> preoccupato per i rifornimenti di grano destinati a Costantinopoli e forse anche per i sommovimenti dei nomadi tra i deserti della Palestina e quelli d'Egitto, che poco dopo sarebbero sfociati nella rivolta capeggiata da Mavia, regina dei Saraceni.<sup>13</sup>

## 2. La celebrazione della vittoria imperiale nei 'luoghi d'acque'. Letteratura, epigrafia e arti figurative

Anche per i nostri testi, come sempre per l'epigramma descrittivo, si pone un problema: si tratta di epigrammi fittizi oppure effettivamente destinati a divenire 'scrittura esposta'?

Secondo Green e Kay, gli epigrammi di Ausonio dovevano essere iscritti sotto una statua del Danubio;<sup>14</sup> Canali<sup>15</sup> pensa ad un dipinto. Osserviamo però che, se il secondo epigramma fosse apposto a una statua, non sarebbe facilmente comprensibile. Per due volte si ripete l'aggettivo possessivo (v. 2 *vestra dicione*; v. 6 *vestrum iugum*), ma non si nominano i destinatari-referenti. Che essi siano gli imperatori Valentiniano I e Graziano risulta

<sup>10</sup> Sulla nascita di Valentiniano II, Cavarzere – Mondin 2003, pp. 194-196 corregge PLRE I, s.v. 'Flavius Valentinianus 8', pp. 934-935.

<sup>11</sup> Così Green 1991, p. 380.

<sup>12</sup> Kay 2001, p. 78 e Lenski 2002, pp. 273 e 280.

<sup>13</sup> Lenski 2002, p. 205. Cf. Sozomen. *HE* vi. 38. 1 e Rufin. *HE* xi. 6.

<sup>14</sup> Green 1991, p. 381; Kay, 2001, p. 73 ss.

<sup>15</sup> Canali 2007, p. 22 n. 28.



evidente solo se si legge il testo del secondo epigramma di seguito al primo, e nemmeno in questo compaiono i nomi degli imperatori.

Gli epigrammi risulterebbero meglio comprensibili se la se personificazione del fiume fosse abbinata ad un altro *titulus* (anche in prosa) che recasse esplicitamente i nomi dei sovrani, oppure se accompagnasse le statue degli imperatori stessi.<sup>16</sup>

Un abbinamento fra *titulus* onorario e iscrizione metrica è comune, in età imperiale, in luoghi connessi alle acque: ad esempio, il ponte di Traiano sull'Alcantara<sup>17</sup> o l'acquedotto di Lambesi.<sup>18</sup> Perché non anche *ad fontem Danubii*? Molto interessanti sono anche fontane monumentali in cui alla personificazione della divinità acquatica si associa l'elogio dell'imperatore. Era il caso, a Efeso, del ninfeo di Traiano.<sup>19</sup> Nel IV secolo, un altro ninfeo di Efeso reca un'iscrizione in onore di Costante.<sup>20</sup> In occidente, il ninfeo dell'*aqua Iulia* sull'Esquilino presenta una particolare connessione con l'iconografia trionfale, spiegabile perché il ninfeo fu edificato da Alessandro Severo riutilizzando la preesistente struttura di un arco di Domiziano, di cui Severo Alessandro conservò i trofei perché era *nefas* rimuoverli dal luogo originario. Ciò consentiva anche di sfruttare il potenziale propagandistico di un'iconografia in cui si celebrava la guerra dell'89 di Domiziano contro Catti e Daci, popolazioni stanziato sul Reno e sul Danubio, contro cui anche Alessandro Severo doveva combattere.<sup>21</sup> Il ninfeo dell'*aqua Iulia* ci interessa per un altro motivo: si discute se fosse pertinente a esso un'iscrizione metrica in distici elegiaci (lo stesso metro dei nostri epigrammi), testimoniata da Petrarca e da altre fonti: CIL VI, 1207 = CLE 895. Giovanna Grisanti Tedeschi tende a escluderlo, e ritiene che l'epigramma

<sup>16</sup> Di monumenti onorari con iscrizioni 'gemelle' dedicati a imperatori co-reggenti abbiamo esempi proprio nel tardo IV secolo: è il caso di CIL VI, 1171 e 1172, provenienti dalle Terme di Caracalla, in onore di Valentiniano e Valente; di CIL VI, 1180 e 1181, rinvenute presso il Circo Massimo, in onore di Valentiniano II e Graziano; infine, di ILS 789, e CIL VI, 3791, che accompagnavano statue di Arcadio e Valentiniano II.

<sup>17</sup> In CLE 878.

<sup>18</sup> Settis 1973, p. 713.

<sup>19</sup> Settis 1973, p. 709.

<sup>20</sup> Settis 1973, p. 733.

<sup>21</sup> Grisanti Tedeschi 1977, p. 41.

possa provenire da un altro degli archi trionfali di Domiziano.<sup>22</sup>  
Il testo recita:

[...] ad divortia Rheni  
pervasi hostilis depopulator agros  
dum tibi bella foris aeternaque sudo tropaea  
Hister pacatis lenior ibit aquis.

Bücheler *ad loc.* commenta che la lingua può far pensare all'epoca di Valentiniano e Valente, perché a suo parere l'espressione *bella sudare* ricorrerebbe per la prima volta in Claudiano (*Hon. nupt.* 111 *proelia sudas*). In realtà, il nesso si trova in un poeta di età flavia, Stazio *Theb.* v. 188–190.<sup>23</sup> Il suggerimento di Bücheler resta però stimolante, in quanto propone un modello di carne celebrativo in cui ricorrono topoi simili a quelli di Ausonio, destinato forse ad un arco di trionfo.

E precisamente un arco di trionfo introduceva al *pons Valentiniani* dedicato a Roma nel 368 dal padre di Simmaco.<sup>24</sup> La monumentalizzazione di luoghi d'acque in onore degli imperatori pannonici era di grande attualità intorno al 370.<sup>25</sup> A Roma il senato dedicò a Graziano un ponte di cui parla Simmaco nell'orazione in onore dell'*Augustus minor*, sviluppando un motivo simile a quello dei nostri epigrammi, l'idea che il grande fiume scorra in territorio romano dalla sorgente alla foce (*orat.* 2. 9):

ecce iam Rhenus non despicit imperia Romana. A nostris  
Alpibus in nostrum exit oceanum. Illa libera hucusque cer-  
vice repagulis pontium captivus urgetur. En noster bicornis,  
cave aequalem te arbitrere Tiberino, quod ambo principum  
monumenta gestatis. Ille redimitus est, tu subactus.

Proclamando la superiorità del ponte romano su del Reno (probabilmente, suggerisce Jean-Pierre Callu,<sup>26</sup> un semplice ponte di barche), Simmaco dà rilievo a Roma, in un momento in cui Valentiniano I ne osteggia l'aristocrazia e trascura l'antica capi-

<sup>22</sup> Grisanti Tedeschi 1977, p. 41.

<sup>23</sup> *Dum quae per Strymona pugnae / quis Rhodope gelidove labor sudatus in Haemo / enumerare vacat.*

<sup>24</sup> Lizzi Testa 2004, p. 447 ss.

<sup>25</sup> Lenski 2002, p. 395.

<sup>26</sup> Callu 2009, p. 64 n. 4.

tale preferendole la Gallia.<sup>27</sup> Forse Ausonio, da sempre sostenitore del primato transalpino,<sup>28</sup> risponde indirettamente all'amico quando compone i suoi epigrammi sollecitato dall'imperatore stesso, che pensava di emulare con una sua personale iniziativa i monumenti innalzati in quegli anni in luoghi d'acque non solo dall'aristocrazia romana ma anche dal fratello Valente. Infatti nel 369 il prefetto di Valente Domizio Modesto<sup>29</sup> completò la costruzione di una grande cisterna descritta dai cronisti bizantini.<sup>30</sup> Sappiamo da Temistio (*orat.* 11. 151D-152A) che anche l'acquedotto di Valente a Costantinopoli fu completato con un ninfeo monumentale da Clearco, prefetto di Costantinopoli nel 373, dopo molti anni di lavoro. L'iscrizione di Clearco<sup>31</sup> rendeva omaggio all'imperatore e può darsi che dopo il 370 tale iscrizione celebrasse proprio i successi di Valente contro i Goti. È significativo che questo monumento abbia suscitato ammirazione in occidente, tanto che san Gerolamo ne parla nel *Chronicon* (a. 373, p. 247 H.). Non minore interesse devono aver destato queste costruzioni alla corte di Valentiniano: che forse, stimolato a gareggiare con il fratello in progetti simili, commissionò ad Ausonio i nostri epigrammi.<sup>32</sup>

### 3. *Arti figurative, letteratura e propaganda alla corte di Valentiniano I*

L'ostentazione della forza e della superiorità della civiltà romana alle frontiere dell'impero: la logica dei due carmi di Ausonio è la stessa che ispira a Simmaco la celebrazione delle costruzioni di Valentiniano sul *limes* renano. Parlando della fortezza di *Alta Ripa*, in *orat.* 2. 14 egli formula il suo pensiero con

<sup>27</sup> Lizzi Testa 2004, pp. 399-411.

<sup>28</sup> Raimondi 2001, p. 90 ss.

<sup>29</sup> PLRE I, 'Domitius Modestus 2', p. 605 ss.: Domizio Modesto, console nel 372, fu prefetto del pretorio dal 369 al 377.

<sup>30</sup> Settis 1973, p. 735.

<sup>31</sup> PLRE I, 'Clearchus 1', p. 211 s.

<sup>32</sup> Alcuni manoscritti di Ausonio accompagnano gli epigrammi con l'annotazione *Ad fontem Danuvii iussu Valentiniani Augusti*: cf. Green 1991, p. 480 e Kay 2001, p. 76. Di Valentiniano I è noto l'interesse per le arti figurative (cf. Amm. xxx. 9. 4 *venustequae pingens et fingens et novorum inventor armorum*).

un esplicito richiamo alle arti figurative: *cum ceteris provinciis et tu* (scil. *Germania*) *iam turrita pingeris*. Alla rappresentazione dell'imperatore come colui che mostra ai nemici le conquiste e gli edifici possenti e splendidi che la sua *sollertia* va costruendo sulla riva del Reno, corrisponde la rappresentazione del *litteratus* come *testis* e *nuntius* delle imprese imperiali. La parola *testis* ritorna nel secondo panegirico di Simmaco con un'insistenza non casuale e non spiegabile solo in chiave biografica. Simmaco si era trattenuto a corte per circa due anni ed era stato testimone oculare delle imprese dell'imperatore.<sup>33</sup> Egli chiama i luoghi a testimoni delle imprese dell'imperatore in *orat.* 2. 4 *Nec arduis locorum obicimus impedimur: testis est haec ipsa ripa barbariae, cui altitudo nomen imposuit*; ed ancora in *orat.* 2. 23 *Facilis adsertio est, cum Rheno teste nitamur*.

Il motivo è antico: si trova già nel *Panegyricus Messallae* (vv. 108-111 *Testis mihi victae / fortis Iapidiae miles, testis quoque fallax / Pannonius, gelidas passim disiectus in Alpes, / testis Arupinis et pauper natus in arvis*); nel panegirico di Plinio per Traiano il mondo intero può essere testimone della gloria del principe (1 [I]. 75. 3). In Pacato (*Paneg.* 12 [II]. 34. 1) il fiume *Savus* è testimone della vittoria di Teodosio a Siscia; in Claudiano il Tevere (*Prob. et Olybr* 209-225) e il Po (*Hon. VI cons.* 159 ss.) sono testimoni della battaglia del Frigido e della sconfitta di Alarico. In altri passi dell'orazione 2 di Simmaco, il tema è applicato direttamente all'autore dell'elogio, e la variazione non è indifferente: nel nuovo contesto il vecchio topos appare indice della consapevolezza della funzione del *litteratus*. Simmaco proclama per sé: *Canant alii, quae supersunt: ego testis fungar officio* (*orat.* 2. 31). E altrove esordisce, da vero *praeco* delle virtù imperiali: *Audite, quam mira adseram, qui gesta nescitis* (*orat.* 2. 15). Ma soprattutto, in uno dei capitoli più interessanti dell'orazione, Simmaco estende il motivo all'intera classe dei *litterati*: *Silentium magnis rebus inimicus est. Quid est gloria, si tacetur? Habes tot testimonia quot ingenia* (*orat.* 2. 30). Anche negli epigrammi di Ausonio troviamo il tema del *nuntiare*: nel primo dei due epigrammi il Danubio vede le imprese dell'imperatore e perciò può fungere da *nuntius* (v. 6): dietro la personificazione del fiume è il poeta

<sup>33</sup> Roda 1973, p. 63.

stesso che parla, che si incarica di essere *nuntius* della vittoria imperiale.

Il linguaggio del nostro epigramma ha significative consonanze con alcune leggi di Valentiniano, Graziano e Valente: la prima, del 365 (*CTh* VIII. 11. 2), proibisce di riscuotere abusivamente donativi in occasione di consolati o vittorie imperiali. Vi ritroviamo il motivo del *nuntius* della vittoria diffuso in tutto l'impero: *Si quando victoriae, si quando laetitiae publicae nuntiantur vel novorum consulum nomina perferuntur, collationi nullus locus, nulla sit licentia*. Forse di qualche anno successiva (probabilmente del 369) è un'altra legge (*CTh* VIII. 11. 3), in cui riecheggia un tema molto vicino a uno dei nostri epigrammi: in tutto il mondo si diffonde il *faustus nuntius* delle *inlustres victoriae*, e più precisamente delle *strages hostium*:

Qui si quando faustorum nuntiorum gaudia provincialibus intimantur quotiensque quid per terrarum orbem disseminatur, seu militum illustres victoriae seu strages hostium aut nostri triumphus perferuntur vel hi quos geremus aut deferimus consulatus.

L'accentuazione di questo motivo nei due autori operanti alla corte di Treviri appare significativa. Potremmo dire che in Simmaco e in Ausonio la descrizione, grazie all'arte della parola di cui il *litteratus* è depositario, supplisce all'impossibilità di tutti i sudditi di essere testimoni diretti della *industria* e della *virtus* del sovrano. Alla corte di Valentiniano I il *litteratus*, a quanto pare, ha il compito di mostrare la maestà e la forza del principe, sia che si esprima nella grandiosità delle costruzioni e delle cerimonie, sia che si manifesti nelle vittorie militari. L'imperatore avoca direttamente a sé un programma in cui la cultura – le arti figurative e le tecniche con cui vengono costruite ed ornate le fortezze sulla riva del Danubio, e non diversamente l'arte della parola – è considerata mero strumento al suo servizio. Il compito dell'oratore e del poeta è chiaro, ma anche limitato: rappresentare le imprese presenti del sovrano, non ispirarle o consigliarle. Fra le varie *artes*, insomma, alla corte di Valentiniano la retorica e la poesia sembrano avere un ruolo non troppo diverso dalla pittura o dall'architettura, o della scultura. Le *litterae* così hanno il loro *officium*, ma molto meno importante di quanto *litterati* come Ausonio,

o Simmaco, vorrebbero: ridotti a *testes*, a *nuntii* del potere imperiale, non sono più, come al tempo di Giuliano, in condizione di contribuire a creare tale potere indicandone i fondamenti.

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### *Abstract*

Two epigrams by Ausonius concerning the springs of the river Danube are influenced by the epigram and panegyric tradition. Had these epigrams been composed for a statue or painting of the river-god Danube, it would be difficult to explain why neither Valentinian nor Gratian is mentioned in either of them. More likely, the epigrams were written for a more complex monument connected to 'water places' (an aqueduct, fountain or bridge) in which the verse inscription was to be coupled with a prose *titulus* containing the emperors' names. An interesting example of the celebration of imperial victories in a monument connected with waters is represented by a verse inscription mentioning the Rhine and the Danube, possibly from a fountain built in Rome by Severus Alexander. Around 370 AD, the emperors of the Valentinian dynasty were highly interested in such monuments, which is why Valentinian may have asked Ausonius to compose these epigrams in praise of his own and his brother's victories.





ISABELLA GUALANDRI

## HONORIUS IN ROME: A PAGAN *ADVENTUS*?\*

(CLAUD., *HON. VI CONS.*)

The detailed overview of Roman culture in the fourth and fifth centuries AD provided by Alan Cameron's monumental book on *The Last Pagans of Rome*,<sup>1</sup> sweeping away many standard assumptions of past scholars, aims at dismantling the 'romantic myth' of a pagan aristocracy engaged in a religious and cultural resistance to Christianity.<sup>2</sup> In a seminar held in Perugia in 2011 and chaired by Rita Lizzi Testa a group of classicists gathered to analyse this impressive work and what I am here going to discuss will develop some remarks I made on that occasion.<sup>3</sup>

Cameron (p. 4) acknowledges that Claudian was a pagan, but a pagan who wrote for Christian patrons (the Anicii in Rome, then Honorius' court in Milan), so that the rich mythological imagery which gives his poetry an apparently 'pagan' flavour must be regarded as purely literary, without any religious meaning: indeed, 'if Claudian's "pagan" poems were so popular with Christians, then the argument that other works of "pagan" character must have been written by and for pagans loses much of its force' (p. 208).

About such general statements I expressed my disagreement several years ago,<sup>4</sup> and, trying to distinguish the different

\* I am grateful to Peter Dronke for his careful revision of the language of this paper, and to Fabrizio Slavazzi for some valuable suggestions.

<sup>1</sup> Cameron 2011.

<sup>2</sup> As suggested by the title of a famous book (Momigliano 1965).

<sup>3</sup> Gualandri 2013.

<sup>4</sup> Gualandri 1989, pp. 25–48.

ways in which Claudian mentions pagan gods, I assumed that sometimes in a subtle way he alludes to images of prayers and rituals which seem to bring with them a specific religious value.<sup>5</sup> I then supposed that this ambiguous use of 'pagan' traits might be explained as a sort of homage by which Stilicho, through Claudian's poetry and the traditional values it evoked, aimed at gratifying the surviving pagan aristocrats, whose help he needed, while their religion had been banned and laws were increasingly supporting the interests of Christians.<sup>6</sup> That is why 'pagan' features of such a kind are of special importance when they appear in poems which were performed by Claudian in Rome, in front of the Senate itself, as the *Panegyric on Honorius' sixth consulship* was in 404.<sup>7</sup>

Honorius' sixth consulship was inaugurated, as usual, on January the first, but the emperor, moving from Ravenna,<sup>8</sup> had made his entry into Rome a few months earlier (autumn 403), and in Rome he would remain at least until July 404.<sup>9</sup> The panegyric begins extolling this happy year (ll. 1–38), in which Honorius, returning to the imperial palace on the Palatine hill, brings it back to life, as at Delphi the oracle, which in the absence of its god has become dumb, regains its prophetic powers when Apollo returns from the northern lands of the Hyperboreans; ll. 39–52 describe the majestic view from the Palatine over the Capitol, the Forum and the countless shrines where gods watch over Rome; ll. 53–121 recall in a flashback

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Stilicho's prayer to Mars on the battlefield in *Ruf.* I. 334 ff.; the hymn to Victory in *Stil.* III. 202 ff.; Honorius portrayed as an Egyptian god in *Hon. IV cons.* 506 ff.; the speech of an old barbarian warrior who dissuades Alaric from assaulting Rome, as it is protected by its gods, in *Get.* 469 ff.; the ancient rituals which are extolled in the *laudes Romae* of *Stil.* III. 160 ff.; Stilicho pursuing Alaric compared to a pagan priest who successfully performs a purifying ceremony in *Hon. VI cons.* 324 ff.; purifying ceremonies mentioned in *Eutr.* I. 19 ff.

<sup>6</sup> Gualandri 1989, pp. 45; 48; cf. also Levy 1958, p. 340; Castello 1979, p. 166.

<sup>7</sup> Also the third book on Stilicho's consulship (400) and the *De bello Getico* (402) had been performed in Rome.

<sup>8</sup> Honorius moved from Milan to the safer location of Ravenna in 402, after Alaric had been defeated at Pollentia and Verona.

<sup>9</sup> The chronology is provided by the dates of Honorius' laws: cf. Döpp. 1980, p. 230. Honorius could have been in Rome until early 405 according to Gillett 2001, p. 138 (who lists the emperor's visits in Rome).

Theodosius' triumphal parade in 389, when the emperor took the child Honorius with him to Rome and presented him to the Senate as his heir; the following section (ll. 122–330), focused on Stilicho's deeds, covers the narrative of Alaric's retreat after the battles of Pollentia and Verona and his final expulsion from Italy;<sup>10</sup> in ll. 331–425 Honorius' *adventus* is enthusiastically demanded by the Senate and the people of Rome and by the goddess Rome herself, who is already preparing for him a triumphal chariot; in ll. 426–493 Honorius, replying to Rome, extols Stilicho's achievements; then (ll. 494–522) he sets out on his journey from Ravenna to Rome along the *Popilia* and the *Flaminian Way*, crossing the *Apennines* and finally making his entry into Rome across the *Milvian Bridge*; (ll. 523–639) from the *Milvian Bridge* as far as the *Palatine* the crowds gather to welcome the emperor and to watch the *adventus* procession; in accordance with tradition Honorius addresses the Senate, then along the *Via Sacra* he proceeds to the imperial Palace on the *Palatine*, from which he enters the *Circus Maximus*, to receive the people's acclamations and to preside over various games celebrating the inauguration of the consulship.<sup>11</sup>

As scholars have pointed out,<sup>12</sup> Claudian's poem in a complex way conflates themes of *adventus* and of consulship celebration, sometimes evoking images of triumph, even if it is generally excluded that a proper triumph ceremony took place, which, as is well known, would have included a visit to the Capitol, where the victorious general would place a laurel wreath before the statue of Jupiter Capitolinus and sacrifice to him. Such a ritual apparently disappeared since Constantine, entering Rome in 312 after the victory at the *Milvian Bridge*, refused to perform it;<sup>13</sup> anyhow in Honorius' time it was inconceivable that it might be resumed by a Christian emperor.

<sup>10</sup> An 'extremely tendentious and elliptical account' (Dewar 1996, p. xxix ff.; 147).

<sup>11</sup> On this *adventus* and its political significance cf. Müller 2011, pp. 376–381.

<sup>12</sup> Döpp. 1980, p. 235 f.; Dewar 1996, p. xlv; MacCormack 1981, pp. 52–54; McCormick 1986, p. 84 f.

<sup>13</sup> On Constantine's entry in Rome in 312 cf. McCormick 1986, p. 101

Nonetheless some issues which seem to recall pagan Rome, and more specifically the triumph ceremonies and Jupiter Capitolinus itself, are subtly hinted at in Claudian's panegyric,<sup>14</sup> for instance in the description of the city's majestic view which the emperor enjoys from the height of his palace (42 *regia*) on the Palatine hill, the *Domus Augustana* (or rather which the personified *Domus* itself can overlook) (ll. 42 ff.):<sup>15</sup>

- attollens apicem subiectis regia rostris  
tot circum delubra videt tantisque deorum  
cingitur excubiis! <sup>16</sup> Iuvat infra tecta Tonantis  
45 cernere Tarpeia pendentes rupe Gigantas  
caelatasque fores mediisque volantis signa  
nubibus et densum stipantibus aethera templis  
aeraque vestitis numerosa puppe columnis  
consita subnixasque iugis immanibus aedes,  
50 naturam cumulante manu, spoliisque micantes  
innumeros arcus. acies stupet igne metalli  
et circumfuso trepidans obtunditur auro.

It is the glorious description of a splendid city, glittering with gold, rich in shrines, imposing palaces, triumphal arches.<sup>17</sup> The landscape is full of pagan temples and gods' statues, whose constant protection and vigilance is stressed by *excubiae* (l. 44): they are as guards who keep watch over Rome.<sup>18</sup> Special atten-

n. 95; Frascchetti 1999, pp. 47 ff.; 249 ff.; Dufraigne 1994, p. 250; Curran 2000, pp. 71–75.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Guipponi-Gineste 2007, p. 8.

<sup>15</sup> On this passage see Grig 2012, p. 34; on other Claudian's passages about the Palatine cf. Charlet 2013b, p. 338 f.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Mart. viii. 36. 7 f. (the *Domus Augustana* in Domitian's time: Dewar 1996, p. 91): *aethera sic intrat nitidis ut conditus astris / inferiore tonet nube serenus apex*. In Ovid. *fast.* i. 85 f. Jupiter from his temple looks down at the world: *Iuppiter arce sua totum cum spectat in orbem / nil nisi Romanum, quod tueatur, habet*; Dewar 1996, p. 92 recalls Lucan's Jupiter, i. 195 f. *O magnae qui moenia prospicis urbis / Tarpeia de rupe, Tonans*).

<sup>17</sup> On the Capitol's gilded ceilings and tiles cf. Plin. *nat.* xxxiii. 57. See also in Claud. *Hon. VI cons.* i the golden temple vowed in past times to *Fortuna Redux*; Rome's brilliance is recalled in *Stil.* iii. 133 ff. *quae luce metalli / aemula vicinis fastigia consertit astris*; and iii. 65 f. *septem circumspice montes / qui solis radios auri fulgore lacessunt*. Cf. Roberts 2001, p. 545 f.

<sup>18</sup> Ware 2012, pp. 135–141 remarks several verbal correspondences with Vergil's description of the shield of Aeneas.

tion is paid to the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus and its precious doors (l. 46: *caelatas [...] fores*);<sup>19</sup> and the god's presence is evoked even later in the poem (l. 356 ff.), when Rome urges Honorius to come, and describing the triumphal parade she is preparing for him, mentions the usual tableaux (representing such scenes as the battles fought or the cities of the conquered lands) which were to be carried in the procession, defining them (l. 374 f.) as *pompae simulacra futurae / Tarpeio spectanda Iovi*, thus placing them under the gaze of Jupiter Capitolinus, who is here imagined in his traditional function.

Moreover, describing Honorius' journey from Ravenna to Rome, Claudian *inter alia* focuses on the source of the Clitumnus (ll. 506–514), not only for the pleasure of portraying its waters' *mirabilia*, but also in order to recall the white bulls bred there to be sacrificed to Jupiter Capitolinus in triumphal ceremonies: *quin et Clitumni sacras victoribus undas / candida quae Latiis praebent armenta triumphis / visere cura fuit*,<sup>20</sup> as indeed Claudian also states in a comparison elsewhere, *carm. min.* 4. 3 f. *non tales, Clitumne, lavas in gurgite tauros, / Tarpeio referunt quos pia vota Iovi*. With similar subtle details Claudian, without describing a traditional pagan triumph, succeeds in bringing it to his audience's attention.<sup>21</sup>

Such points emerge in observations of earlier scholars. But I would point out as particularly significant, at the beginning of the poem (ll. 25–38), the comparison between Apollo who comes back to Delphi and brings the oracle back to life, and Honorius who comes back to the Palatine hill, whence he will spread his oracles (that is the laws), and make the laurels

<sup>19</sup> The whole passage has been interpreted in different ways: cf. Dewar 1996, pp. 88–100. Claudian is referring to Jupiter Optimus Maximus Capitolinus, although he mentions (l. 44) the *tecta Tonantis*, and Augustus had actually built a temple to Jupiter Tonans in the *area Capitolina*; as to the allusion to Giants (l. 45), Dewar p. 92 f. notes that 'though presumably it was clear enough to the contemporary audience', it is impossible for us to understand it exactly; Long 2004, p. 13 regards the whole description as a sort of 'poetic phantasm'; *volantia signa* (l. 46) may be referred to statues on the roofs of temples (Roberts 2001, p. 548), or on top of columns (Dewar 1996, p. 96).

<sup>20</sup> See also (l. 504) the reference to the ancient oracular shrine of *Iuppiter Appenninus*.

<sup>21</sup> Guipponi-Gineste 2007, p. 9 ff.

grow again for Rome's standards (once more alluding to triumphs):

- 25 [...] cum pulcher Apollo  
 lustrat Hyperboreas Delphis cessantibus aras  
 nil tum Castaliae rivis communibus undae  
 dissimiles, vili nec discrepat arbore laurus  
 antraque maesta silent inconsultique recessus.
- 30 At si Phoebus adest [...]
   
tum silvae, tunc antra loqui, tum vivere fontes  
 tum sacer horror aquis adytisque effunditur echo  
 clarior et doctae spirant praesagia rupes.
- 35 Ecce Palatino crevit reverentia monti  
 exultatque habitante deo potioraque Delphis  
 supplicibus late populis oracula pandit  
 atque suas ad signa iubet revirescere laurus.

The passage, playing with the mythological images of Apollo and Delphi and reworking some callimachean themes, whose echo is elsewhere clear in Claudian's poetry,<sup>22</sup> might seem at first sight to be mainly of literary interest, without any religious meaning. But while Delphi had actually fallen into disuse long before Claudian's day,<sup>23</sup> a Christian tradition maintained that the pagan oracles had become dumb when Christ was conceived by the Virgin Mary.<sup>24</sup>

On the contrary, more than once Claudian speaks of the revival of the oracles always connecting it with the emperor: for instance in *Hon. III cons.* 117, where Dodona's oaks resume their prophetic voice in his honour, when, moving from Constantinople to Italy, Honorius passes close to them; and above all, in *Hon. IV cons.* 143 ff., where Delphi is revived at his birth.<sup>25</sup> It would be impossible not to perceive in these passages the mark

<sup>22</sup> Gualandri 2004.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. e.g. Symm. *epist.* iv. 2 about the silence of the oracles of Cumae, Dodona, Delphi. For the history of the Delphic oracle in imperial age, its revival under Hadrian and its obsolescence in the following years cf. Parke – Wormell 1956, I, pp. 287–296.

<sup>24</sup> Then, according to Prud. *apoth.* 435 ff. *Delphica damnatis tacuerunt sortibus antra, / non tripodas cortina regit, non spumat anhelus / fata Sibyllinis fanaticis edita libris.*

<sup>25</sup> As opposed to Prudentius: see *infra*. Moroni 1993, p. 16 n. 15 suggests that Prudentius' passage may be an answer to Claudian's *Hon. IV cons.* 143–148.

of a religious polemic.<sup>26</sup> I would add another detail about the passage from *Hon. VI cons.* quoted above. As Honorius' palace, the *Domus Augustana*, is in close proximity to the temple of Palatine Apollo<sup>27</sup> (or rather to its ruins, as the temple had been destroyed by fire in 363),<sup>28</sup> Claudian's simile acquires a particular flavour, so that in his audience's mind the imperial residence and the adjacent old shrine may easily overlap, and Apollo and Honorius, the oracle and the palace merge into one. Thus a literary theme is revived and transferred into the context of contemporary Rome.

The thin aura of paganism surrounding the Palatine is all the more significant, in that Claudian glosses over the city's gradual christianization, which had begun when various places of worship had been built beyond the walls of Aurelian.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, Theodosius' and Honorius' names were connected with the restoration of one of these, St. Paul's basilica (San Paolo fuori le Mura), as is testified by the metric inscription commemorating its completion: *Theodosius coepit perfecit Honorius aulam / doctoris mundi sacratam corpore Pauli*.<sup>30</sup> But under Pope Damasus (366–384) Christian churches also began to penetrate Rome's monumental centre, where at the Western corner of the Palatine itself, close to pagan temples<sup>31</sup> and within 150 meters of the imperial palaces, the church of St. Anastasia was built.<sup>32</sup> On the other hand, the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus, whose splendour Claudian still extols, is depicted in contemporary Christian texts as abandoned and decaying, like the other pagan religious buildings, while the crowd pours to visit the tombs of the martyrs. See for instance Jerome, speaking of the *populus* (*epist.* 107.1 f. *auratum squalet Capitolium, fuligine et araneorum telis omnia Romae templa*

<sup>26</sup> Dewar 1996, p. 82.

<sup>27</sup> Which had been built by Augustus on his own land and was strictly linked to him: cf. Suet. *Aug.* 29. 3; Augustus *res g.* 19; Vell. Pat. II. 81. 3.

<sup>28</sup> Amm. xxiii. 3. 3.

<sup>29</sup> Fraschetti 1999, p. 274 ff.

<sup>30</sup> CLE 314. The church had been dedicated in 391 by a Theodosian *praefectus Urbis*: cf. Matthews 1990, p. 228.

<sup>31</sup> Namely the Lupercal and the temples to Magna Mater and Apollo (Curran 2000, p. 143).

<sup>32</sup> Or perhaps it had already been built under Constantine: cf. Cecchelli 1993. On the Roman churches of Damasus cf. Curran 2000, pp. 142–147.

*cooperta sunt; movetur urbs sedibus suis, et inundans populus ante delubra semiruta currit ad martyrum tumulos*); and Prudentius, who also mentions the Senate (c. *Symm.* 1. 548–550 *iamque ruit paucis Tarpeia rupe relictis / ad sincera virum penetralia Nazareorum / atque ad apostolicos Evandria curia fontes*); and Paulinus of Nola, who contrasts the deserted pagan temples with the prayers that in Christian churches rise up to the sky in the worship of Peter and Paul (*carm.* 19. 67–70 *laudibus aeterni domini ferit aethera clamor / sanctus et incusso Capitolia culmine nutant. / In vacuis simulacra tremunt squalentia templis / vocibus icta piis impulsaque nomine Christi*).<sup>33</sup> As to Claudian, it may be worth remembering that of course he does not ignore the existence of Christian shrines, but mentions them only once and just to make fun of the Christian *magister equitum* Jacobus, addressing him in a mocking tone as he trusts prayers more than the armies' strength: (*carm. min.* 50. 1): *per cineres Pauli, per cani limina Petri*, etc.<sup>34</sup>

But there is more than that. One of Augustine's sermons discovered by F. Dolbeau (*serm.* 61. 25 f.), describes an imperial *adventus* in Rome, where the emperor pays a visit not to the superb Hadrian's memorial, but to the neighbouring *memoria piscatoris*, prostrating himself in front of Peter's tomb:

veniunt modo reges Romam [...] Ibi sunt templa imperatorum qui superbia sua divinos sibi honores exegerunt ab hominibus et, quia poterant – reges enim erant et dominatores – extorserunt potius quam meruerunt. Cui potuit tale extorquere piscator? Ibi est sepulcrum piscatoris, ibi templum est imperatoris. Petrus ibi est in sepulcro, Hadrianus ibi est in templo. Templum Hadriani, memoria Petri. Venit imperator. Videamus quo curret, ubi genua adfingere voluit: in templo imperatoris, an in memoria piscatoris? Posito diademate, pectus tundit ubi est piscatoris corpus,

<sup>33</sup> Jerome's letter is slightly earlier than Claudian's poem: 400 (Labourt) or 403 (Fraschetti); for the date of Prudentius' *Contra Symmachum*, between January and summer 402 cf. Charlet 1986, pp. 380–383; about scholars' different opinions Gualandri 1987, pp. 365–369; a little later than Claudian is Paulinus' *carm.* 19 (405): cf. Roberts 2001, p. 545.

<sup>34</sup> On *Carm.* 50 cf. Vanderspoel 1986; Consolino 2004. Both papers stress how familiar Claudian was with the Christian cult of the saints, even if he did not believe in them.



cuius merita cogitat, cuius coronam credit, per quem cupit  
pervenire ad deum, cuius orationibus se adiuvari sentit et  
invenit.<sup>35</sup>

Dolbeau's suggestion, that Augustine is here referring to Honorius' *adventus* at the end of 403, is quite attractive, since, in comparison with his totally Christian picture, Claudian's description would acquire a particularly strong pagan meaning;<sup>36</sup> but there is no agreement among scholars.<sup>37</sup> Nonetheless, while it is likely that Theodosius and Honorius, and other Christian emperors as well, coming to Rome visited Peter's tomb,<sup>38</sup> there is no evidence that a Christian sanctuary was incorporated into the itinerary of the triumphal parade, or that Peter's basilica replaced the Capitol in public ceremonies.<sup>39</sup>

Anyway Claudian seems always to manifest a stubborn will to oppose Christian images, as we can guess comparing him with contemporary Christian authors, most of all with Prudentius. As several scholars have shown, between Claudian and Prudentius – both high officials, who well knew the Roman milieu, who wrote for the same public and were acquainted with each other's work – there seems to take place a sort of polemic dialogue whose focus, *inter alia*, is the Roman victory over Alaric at Pollentia: while Claudian represents it in a non-Christian perspective, as due to Stilicho's achievement, Prudentius (*Contra Symmachum*) stresses its Christian meaning, extolling the pious emperor Honorius.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Dolbeau 1996, p. 266; cf. also *serm.* 51. 4; *in ps.* 86 8; 140. 21.

<sup>36</sup> On the sermon's date (autumn 403) cf. Dolbeau 1996, pp. 244–247; 626 ff.; 640.

<sup>37</sup> Dufraigne 1994, p. 256, n. 31 does not rule out the possibility that Augustine is referring to an *adventus* in 407; McCormick 1986, p. 57 recalls a triumphal *adventus* of Honorius in Rome in 416; according to Fraschetti, p. 262 in Augustine's text *modo* has a generic sense and does not mean exactly 'now'.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Fraschetti 1999, pp. 240; 264.

<sup>39</sup> Fraschetti 1999, p. 265.

<sup>40</sup> First Cameron 1970, pp. 469 ff. analyzing the relationship between Claudian and Prudentius maintained that not only Prudentius knew and imitated Claudian, but that in turn he was imitated by Claudian; cf. also Cameron 1976, p. 370 f.; both Charlet 1986, p. 383, and Vanderspoel 1986, p. 254 proved that Prudentius in *Contra Symmachum* attacked Claudian's view of the battle of Pollentia as described in *De bello Getico*; cf. Gualandri 1997, p. 378 f.; elsewhere (Gualandri 2000, p. 167) I argued that in the *Panegyric on Honorius*' sixth

To adduce just one example, in the third book for Stilicho's consulship, which was performed in Rome, Claudian, in a famous passage, celebrates together the new consul and the city, which is portrayed in all its magnificence (l. 130 ff.):

- 130 proxime dis consul, tantae qui prospicis urbi,  
qua nihil in terris complectitur altius aether,  
cuius nec spatium visus nec corda decorem  
nec laudem vox ulla capit; quae luce metalli  
aemula vicinis fastigia conserit astris;  
135 quae septem scopulis zonas imitatur Olympi;  
armorum legumque parens quae fundit in omnes  
imperium primique dedit cunabula iuris.<sup>41</sup>

As Michael Roberts points out,<sup>42</sup> Prudentius gives this picture an antipagan turn in *Contra Symmachum* I. 416 ff., representing Rome surrounded by darkness and mist, with a thick air dulling her splendour, while Theodosius urges her to free herself from the pagan pollution:

- [...] equidem praedivite cultu  
inlustrata cluis, spoliisque insigne superbis  
attollis caput, et multo circumfluis auro.  
Sed nebulis propter volitantibus obsitus alti  
420 vorticis horret apex, ipsas quoque livida gemmas  
lux hebetat, spissusque dies et fumus ab ora  
subfusus rutilum frontis diadema retundit.  
Obscuras video tibi circumferrier umbras,  
caeruleasque animas atque idola negra volare.<sup>43</sup>

*consulship* Claudian in turn opposed to Prudentius' *Contra Symmachum*, reacting against Christian propaganda about divine interventions and miracles in battles (l. 340 ff.); see now Charlet 2013b, p. 341 f. Moreover while in *Contra Symmachum* II. 731 f. Rome urges the emperor to come to celebrate his triumph *Christo comitante*, when actually Honorius came to Rome, Claudian in *VI cons.* described his *adventus* in an unmistakable pagan view. See also Roberts 2001, p. 546 ff., who maintains that Prudentius in *Contra Symmachum* replies to Claudian's *Stil.* III, and afterwards Claudian in *VI cons.* counters Prudentius.

<sup>41</sup> The religious theme is more explicitly introduced in l. 166 ff., about the ancient rituals and gods which protected Rome: *Haec auguriis firmata Sibyllae, / haec sacris animata Numae. Huic fulmina vibrat / Iuppiter; hanc tota Tritonia Gorgone velat. / Arcanas huc Vesta faces, huc orgia Bacchus / transtulit et Phrygios genitrix turrita leones; / huc defensurus morbos Epidaurius hospes / reptavit placido tractu, vectumque per undas / insula Paeonium texit Tiberina draconem.*

<sup>42</sup> Roberts 2001, p. 547.

<sup>43</sup> With derogatory words (l. 435) about the *cariosorum monstra deorum*.

To this gloomy picture, which looks like a counterpoint to Claudian's description in *Stil.* III, Claudian in turn replies in *Hon.* VI *cons.* describing the splendid Rome whose view can be enjoyed from the Palatine hill:<sup>44</sup> an apparently neutral description which, as I argued, is in a subtle way permeated by pagan hints.

Non-Christian features in Claudian's poetry, as I recalled, have been judged in different ways. Since Claudian wrote in a Christian milieu, as Stilicho's spokesman, not only Alan Cameron, but other scholars as well, speak of a sort of 'cultural paganism',<sup>45</sup> or more specifically assume that the city's monuments described in the *Panegyric on Honorius' sixth consulship* must be regarded 'as aesthetic objects rather than places or objects of cult';<sup>46</sup> or else they are simply puzzled by such an enigmatic picture of an imperial *adventus*.<sup>47</sup> But the 'pagan' features are too many and too relevant to be disregarded.<sup>48</sup> That is why I think that Carlo Castello was probably right in supposing that this panegyric provided Claudian with the opportunity of expressing religious beliefs which he shared with members of the Roman Senate, moving far beyond Stilicho's and Honorius' desiderata.<sup>49</sup> Along the same lines, Jean-Louis Charlet<sup>50</sup> more explicitly assumes that here, perhaps for the first and last time, Claudian did not reflect his patron's political ideas, but expressed his personal feelings, which were focused on the worship of *Roma aeterna*.

<sup>44</sup> About the passages where Claudian echoes Prudentius cf. Roberts 2001, p. 548, n. 35.

<sup>45</sup> Zarini 2007, p. 10, quoting Paschoud 1967, p. 138.

<sup>46</sup> Roberts 2001, p. 548.

<sup>47</sup> MacCormack 1981, p. 52, 'enigmatic in that what he says seems so little in accord with the post-Theodosian Christian empire'.

<sup>48</sup> Perhaps the most 'pagan' passage in the whole poem is at ll. 324–330, where Stilicho pursuing Alaric is compared to a pagan priest (cf. *sacerdos* at l. 326), whose purifying ceremonies are carefully described: *lustralem sic rite facem, cui lumen odorum / sulphure caeruleo nigroque bitumine fumat / circum membra rotat doctus purganda sacerdos, / rore pio spargens et dira fugantibus herbis / numina, purificumque Iovem Triviamque precatus / secum rapturas cantata piacula taedas*.

<sup>49</sup> Castello 1979, p. 190 ff.

<sup>50</sup> Charlet 2009, p. 8; Charlet 2003; Charlet 2005; see now Charlet 2013a.

After this poem Claudian disappears. The hypothesis that he might have been removed from the court as a result of this panegyric's too personal statements<sup>51</sup> would fit well in a novel, but can't be accepted without evidence if we want to write history.

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<sup>51</sup> As was cautiously suggested by Castello 1979, p. 193.

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### *Abstract*

The paper aims at highlighting some pagan features in the *Panegyric on Honorius' Sixth Consulship*, where, describing Honorius' journey to Rome and the enthusiastic welcome by the Roman people, Claudian blends together images of *adventus*, triumph and consular inauguration ceremony, setting them against the background of the pagan city. We can perceive the pagan flavour of his description, that totally disregards the christianization of Rome's topography, by comparing Claudian's poem with contemporary Christian authors.





ROBERTO MANDILE

*CHAOS E ORDINE  
NEL DE RAPTU PROSERPINAE  
DI CLAUDIANO*

Il termine greco *Χάος* (d'ora in avanti *Chaos*) compare per la prima volta nella *Teogonia* di Esiodo, dove figura come il principio originario nella formazione dell'universo; da esso nacquero Erebo e la Notte.<sup>1</sup> Connesso etimologicamente con il verbo *χαίρειν*, 'spalancarsi', *Chaos* indica un vuoto abissale, dotato al tempo stesso di una componente spaziale, funzionale a separare le masse primigenie, e di una componente materiale, che lo fa apparire come un insieme indistinto di nebbia e oscurità.<sup>2</sup> A esso si contrappone il *κόσμος* (d'ora in avanti *kosmos*), l'universo ordinato che si forma dalla divisione degli elementi.

Ben si capisce, dunque, come il *Chaos* venga presto associato agli Inferi, situati, secondo la tradizione pagana, nello spazio vuoto e immenso che si apre al di sotto della superficie terrestre. La misteriosa e terribile indeterminatezza, accentuata dall'oscurità, che caratterizza il regno dei morti viene così a opporsi all'aspetto definito e luminoso dei luoghi dei vivi.<sup>3</sup> Non stupisce, pertanto, che, nella poesia latina, *Chaos* finisca per essere impiegato, quasi metonimicamente, a indicare l'oltretomba nella sua totalità.<sup>4</sup> In quest'accezione si trova anche nelle tre circostanze

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Hes. *theog.* 116 e 740, su cui cf. West 1966, pp. 192-193.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Wacziarg 2001.

<sup>3</sup> Massenzio 1984 rileva la compresenza nella dialettica *Chaos-kosmos* di una connotazione temporale (il *Chaos* come fase anteriore all'ordine) e di una dimensione spaziale (legata alla funzione del *Chaos* di separare i luoghi estranei all'ordine umano da quelli che ne partecipano): 'e che cosa', nota lo studioso, 'c'è di più distante dall'umano, positivamente identificato con il cosmico, della regione della morte?'.

<sup>4</sup> Esempi di quest'uso sono indicati dal ThLL III.1, col. 991, 29-64 e da Wasser 1899, col. 2113, 34-43. Cf. anche Borca 2000, p. 58.

in cui compare nel *De raptu Proserpinae* di Claudiano (cf. I. 28, II. 13 e II. 196).<sup>5</sup> Il che non può meravigliare in un poema incentrato, secondo una linea di lettura ormai consolidata, sul racconto dell'affermazione del nuovo ordine cosmico determinato dal rapimento di Proserpina e dai fatti ad esso successivi.<sup>6</sup> Nulla più del *Chaos* sembra, insomma, adatto a simboleggiare il mondo degli Inferi, che occupa un posto di primo piano nel poema. Ma, indagando più a fondo nelle pieghe di un testo come il *De raptu* innervato da una fitta e articolata trama di suggestioni e rimandi, è possibile cogliere qualcosa di più.

L'opposto del *Chaos*, spazio immenso e confuso associato all'oltretomba, è ciò che ha un ordine, una struttura, un aspetto riconoscibili e rassicuranti. La dialettica *forma/informis* attraversa tutto il *De raptu Proserpinae*. Se le regioni dell'Ade sono *informes plagae* (I. 101), se le *Dirae*, divinità infernali, sono *deformes* (II. 218), se Proserpina, dopo il rapimento, si presenta in sogno alla madre caratterizzata da una *informis macies* (III. 93), parlando dell'amenso paesaggio siciliano in cui avviene il rapimento Claudiano sottolinea, per contro, la *forma loci* (II. 101), una bellezza composta, quasi geometrica, derivante dalla dolcezza con cui la pianura s'inarca a formare una collina e dall'armonia con cui si dispongono tutt'intorno gli elementi naturali (sorgenti, alberi del bosco, lago).<sup>7</sup> Il fatto che, poi, il sostantivo *forma* si trovi impiegato anche in riferimento a Plutone, in unione ossimorica all'aggettivo *durus* o *dirus*<sup>8</sup> (I. 82), dimostra quanto questo contrasto sia vivo in tutto il poema.

Significativo, in questo senso, è il modo in cui si presenta il concilio degli Dei convocato da Giove (III. 8-17). I posti sono assegnati secondo un ordine gerarchico, dal quale non sono

<sup>5</sup> L'osservazione, già in Kellner 1997, p. 116 n. 591, è ripresa da Onorato 2008, p. 185. *Chaos* compare nell'opera claudiana altre tre volte: in *Ruf.* II. 525 (dove indica ancora gli Inferi), *bell. Gild.* 383 e *Stil. cons.* II. 9 (dove è riferito alla confusione primigenia degli elementi). Il testo del *De raptu* è citato secondo l'edizione di Hall 1985.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Charlet 1991, p. XLVII, Charlet 2000, pp. 184-194, e Kellner 1997, pp. 241-268. Efficace riassunto in Guipponi-Gineste 2009, p. 54 n. 69.

<sup>7</sup> Così già Guipponi-Gineste 2009, p. 51.

<sup>8</sup> *Durus* è la lezione meglio attestata dai codici e accolta da Charlet 1991 (che la difende a p. 13 n. b) e Onorato 2008. *Dirus* è stampato da Gesner 1759, Birt 1892, Hall 1985 e Gruzelier 1993.

escluse nemmeno divinità tradizionalmente sfuggenti, come il biforme Glauco e Proteo, che qui si presenta con ‘volto stabile’ (*certo [...] vultu*, v. 13), quasi a voler sottolineare la naturale impossibilità che, nel regno di Giove, possa essere ammessa anche la più piccola traccia di disordine.<sup>9</sup> Ma già in precedenza, nella descrizione della tela tessuta da Proserpina, tale visione dell’universo emergeva con chiarezza (l. 248–251):

Hic elementorum seriem sedesque paternas  
insignibat acu, veterem qua lege tumultum  
discrevit Natura parens et semina iustis  
discessere locis [...].

Proserpina identifica il mondo ordinato, derivante dal *Chaos* originario (cui allude il termine *tumultus* di v. 249<sup>10</sup>), con le *sedes paternae*, ossia con la dimora del padre Giove.<sup>11</sup> E, dopo averne rappresentati gli elementi costitutivi (cielo, mare e terra, con le sue cinque zone climatiche), ella effigia, da ultimo, i *sacraria* dello zio Dite, che appaiono situati in uno spazio vago e incerto, ma chiaramente distinto rispetto al mondo ordinato (l. 266–267): *Nec non et patruī pingit sacraria Ditis / fatalesque sibi Manes*. La separatezza sussistente tra i regni dei due fratelli, della quale Proserpina sembra ben consapevole, era stata, d’altronde, esplicitamente affermata già nel discorso iniziale che Plutone aveva rivolto a Mercurio, unico dio autorizzato a varcare i confini tra i mondi, allo scopo di far pervenire a Giove la richiesta di una moglie (cf. l. 89–90). In merito al significato della scena di *πεπλοποιία* in questo punto del poema, le interpretazioni conver-

<sup>9</sup> Sul concilio del *De raptu* cf. Fo 1982, pp. 189–197; si è sottolineato come l’assegnazione dei posti nel concilio ricalchi la struttura gerarchica della società romana (cf. Duc 1994, pp. 82–83). Da Onorato 2008 traggio le traduzioni del *De raptu Proserpinae*.

<sup>10</sup> Il vocabolo è tradotto con ‘chaos’ da Platnauer 1922 e Gruzelier 1993, ‘caos’ da Onorato 2008 (cf. p. 223), ‘désordre’ da Charlet 1991. Cf. anche Potz 1985, p. 143 (riportato da Ahlschweig 1998, p. 171 n. 344).

<sup>11</sup> Così intendono il nesso Charlet 1991 e Onorato 2008 (cf. p. 223), in contrasto con l’interpretazione, meno convincente, fornita da altri studiosi (Platnauer 1922, Potz 1985, p. 243, Gruzelier 1993 e Ahlschweig 1998, p. 171) che vi vedono un riferimento alle sedi naturali degli elementi. Si può ricordare l’insistenza sul legame padre-figlia nel discorso con cui Proserpina, dopo il rapimento, si lamenta con il genitore del trattamento riservatole: cf. ll. 251 e 253.

gono nel leggermi un'allusione simbolica al seguito della vicenda, una prefigurazione del rapimento che di lì a poco si consumerà. Come ha scritto Isabella Gualandri, 'Proserpina tesse un'immagine di ordine, inconsapevole che attorno a lei forze oscure congiurano per distruggerlo'.<sup>12</sup>

Del resto, se è vero che il pericolo della guerra minacciata da Plutone viene allontanato dall'intervento conciliante di Giove, che sacrifica la figlia per evitare la vittoria del *Chaos* sul *kosmos*,<sup>13</sup> è altresì chiaro che il rapimento comporta una serie di trasformazioni che non investono soltanto la vittima prescelta, destinata a lasciare la terra per entrare nell'Ade, ma riguardano anche altri personaggi come Cerere e Plutone nonché i luoghi in cui le azioni si svolgono.<sup>14</sup>

Il motivo della trasformazione attraversa, dunque, l'intero *De raptu*, che, sotto questo profilo, può essere accostato alle *Metamorfosi* di Ovidio, il poema delle *mutatae formae*, nel quale tanta importanza viene assegnata proprio al *Chaos*. Esso compare, infatti, all'inizio del poema, dove è descritto non nei termini dell'abisso promordiale di Esiodo, ma come una 'massa amorfa e confusa'.<sup>15</sup> Secondo Emilio Pianezzola, esiste un collegamento assai profondo tra la cosmogonia, cui Ovidio riserva ampio spazio (più di ottanta versi), e la metamorfosi, configurandosi la prima come genesi dell'ordine, la seconda come una ricostituzione dell'ordine. Nello stravolgimento violento cui le cose sono sottoposte fin dall'origine, Ovidio riconosce il principio esplicativo della realtà: l'affermazione del nuovo ordine raggiunto grazie alla

<sup>12</sup> Così Gualandri 2005, p. 210; cf. anche Charlet 1991, p. XLIII e von Albrecht 1972, p. 23. A Bernert 1938, Gualandri 2005 e Onorato 2008, pp. 30-34, si rinvia pure per un quadro delle suggestioni orfiche riconoscibili nel passo. Cf. inoltre von Albrecht 1989, Gruzelier 1993, pp. 142-143, Duc 1994, pp. 68-72 e Guipponi-Gineste 2010, pp. 21-42. Un'analisi stilistica del passo in Ahlschweig 1998, p. 169 ss. Un diverso trattamento del motivo cosmogonico nell'opera claudiana si trova in *carm. min.* 26, dedicato alla sorgente termale aponense: cf. Cazzuffi 2010-2011, che mette in relazione questo testo proprio con la *πελοποιία* del *De raptu* (cf. p. 34).

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Charlet 1991, pp. XLIII-XLIV e Wheeler 1995, che enfatizza il legame tra il motivo dell'ira iniziale di Plutone contro Giove, topos della poesia epica per il quale Claudiano s'ispirerebbe soprattutto a Stazio, e il tema centrale del poemetto.

<sup>14</sup> Sulla metamorfosi di Plutone e Cerere cf. Onorato 2006; sul paesaggio infernale nel *De raptu* cf. Mandile 2013.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. *Ov. met.* I. 5-9, su cui cf. Barchiesi 2005, p. 152.

metamorfosi è spesso, nel poema, l'unico modo con cui può essere sanato un disordine iniziale che, se rimanesse immutato, ingenererebbe ulteriore confusione.<sup>16</sup>

È possibile scorgere qualcosa di analogo nel *De raptu Proserpinae*? Si potrebbe, a una prima analisi, rilevare che a mettere in moto la trasformazione destinata a produrre il nuovo ordine cosmico è la potenza dell'amore, che ha un ruolo fondamentale nei miti cosmogonici (anche se non in quello ovidiano),<sup>17</sup> ma pure in molte storie di metamorfosi. La mancanza dell'amore nell'oltretomba è presentata come una condizione di quiete non più tollerabile: Plutone, non accettando più la *quies* in cui è vissuto finora e avanzando la richiesta di una moglie, pretende che l'ordine del mondo sia modificato.<sup>18</sup> Ma *quies* è, di per sé, parola ambigua: da un lato essa è un riferimento alla pace su cui l'universo si è retto e che il dio dell'Ade minaccia di stravolgere, dall'altro è un'allusione tanto sinistra quanto trasparente alla condizione del riposo eterno della morte.<sup>19</sup>

La necessità che l'amore penetri anche nell'oltretomba non è, però, sufficiente a giustificare la trasformazione dell'ordine cosmico che il rapimento di Proserpina determinerà, non solo perché il sentimento amoroso nasce in Plutone solo tardivamente, a rapimento già compiuto (cf. II. 273-274),<sup>20</sup> ma anche perché la vicenda al centro del poema ha implicazioni e conseguenze ben più vaste e complesse. Informando Venere del piano che ha escogitato per rapire Proserpina, Giove afferma (I. 217-219):

Candida Tartareo nuptum Proserpina regi  
iam pridem decreta dari: sic Atropos urget,  
sic cecinit longaeva Themis.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Pianezzola 2010, pp. 65-66.

<sup>17</sup> Il modello è, ancora una volta, Hes. *theog.* 120. La cosmogonia ovidiana è definita, sotto questo profilo, anomala da Barchiesi 2005, p. 146. Cf. anche Pianezzola 2010, pp. 62-63.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. I. 111: *Non adeo toleranda quies* (discorso di Plutone a Mercurio) e I. 223: *Cur ultima regna quiescunt?* (discorso di Giove a Venere).

<sup>19</sup> Basterà ricordare il legame di fratellanza che, nella mitologia classica, unisce Sonno e Morte, nati da Erebo e Notte, a loro volta figli di Chaos: cf. Hes. *theog.* 211 e 758.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Charlet 2000, p. 188, e Onorato 2008, p. 219, il quale rileva che, a differenza che nel racconto del mito nelle *Metamorfosi* di Ovidio, nel *De raptu* 'il *côté* erotico della storia è quasi del tutto trascurato'.

Affiora qui l'idea che ci sia qualcosa di fatale, di inevitabile, di già deciso nel rapimento di Proserpina. È come se la richiesta avanzata da Plutone s'inserisse in un piano provvidenziale più ampio, del quale Giove si fa interprete accordando al fratello una sposa e, anzi, predisponendo le condizioni migliori perché la vittima predestinata possa essere rapita.<sup>21</sup> Si ricordino, a tal proposito, le parole con cui lo stesso Giove conclude il suo discorso al concilio degli Dei (III. 65): *Hoc sanctum; mansura fluant hoc ordine fata*. L'*ordo* è la manifestazione concreta del destino, del quale, come il Padre degli Dei aveva detto a Venere, sono garanti appunto le Parche.<sup>22</sup>

L'accordo tra Giove e Plutone, che passa attraverso il sacrificio di Proserpina, è necessario per scongiurare guai più terribili, come quelli che si annunciano all'inizio del I libro con la rivolta delle potenze inferi, pronte a scatenare una guerra contro il cielo. Sono, però, le Parche stesse, le divinità che danno attuazione alle decisioni del Fato, a contenere sul nascere l'ira di Plutone. L'invito di Lachesi, in questo senso, è chiarissimo (I. 63-65):

ne pete firmatas pacis dissolvere leges  
quas dedimus nevitque colus, neu foedera fratrum  
civili converte tuba.

La furia devastatrice degli Inferi viene, fin da subito, contenuta e ricondotta a più miti propositi.<sup>23</sup> Se proprio Plutone vuole una moglie – aggiunge Lachesi – non ha che da chiederla a Giove (cf. I. 67); ci sono, infatti, leggi che non bisogna sconvolgere, patti che non devono essere modificati. Quali siano lo lascia intuire, poco oltre, lo stesso Plutone nel discorso rivolto a Mercurio, incaricato, a sua volta, di riferire a Giove (I. 99-103); pur lamentandosi dei danni derivati dal sorteggio che gli ha attribuito il terzo regno, egli infatti fa capire che la vera ragione delle sue recriminazioni risiede nella mancanza di una moglie e soprattutto di una prole, condizione che rende il suo potere inferiore a quello del fratello (I. 107-110).

<sup>21</sup> Guipponi-Gineste 2010, p. 32 n. 84, osserva che il ruolo attivo di Giove nel rapimento è un'innovazione claudiana rispetto alla tradizione precedente.

<sup>22</sup> Il collegamento è già evidenziato da Charlet 1991, pp. 20 e 61. Cf. anche Guipponi-Gineste 2010, p. 39. Sul ruolo del fato nel *De raptu* cf. Kellner 1997, pp. 226-228.

<sup>23</sup> Sul tema già Connor 1993, p. 242.

La gravità delle minacce di Plutone risulta, poi, indebolita dal rapido accoglimento della sua richiesta da parte di Giove:<sup>24</sup> in questo modo il rischio che il mondo ripiombi nel *Chaos* è presto scongiurato. In che senso allora si può dire che il *De raptu* canta l'affermazione di un nuovo ordine? A ben vedere, il patto tra i due fratelli, assolvendo la funzione di preservare l'equilibrio tra i loro regni stabilitosi in epoche ormai remote, finisce per perseguire uno scopo ancor più alto: quello di mantenere o addirittura di ridefinire in modo netto la distanza tra la terra e l'aldilà, facendo sì che la prima non assomigli troppo al secondo.

Indizi in questa direzione si rinvencono chiaramente nel poema, *in primis* all'interno del discorso con cui Giove illustra al concilio degli Dei le ragioni del piano da lui escogitato e già parzialmente realizzato con il rapimento di Proserpina (III. 19-65). Egli spiega di aver sottratto gli uomini alla felice condizione dell'età dell'oro, nella quale essi vivevano sotto il regno di suo padre Saturno, allo scopo di stimolare 'coi pungoli di una vita inquieta' (v. 23) la loro operosa intelligenza.<sup>25</sup> Ora, però, aggiunge Giove, il suo comportamento è oggetto di aspri rimproveri da parte di Natura, che lo accusa di essere responsabile di una regressione allo stato ferino del genere umano. Tale regressione deriva dalla sua avarizia (*parcum Iovem*, v. 36), in quanto egli, anziché elargire in abbondanza le sue ricchezze, ha fatto sì che la terra sia diventata selvatica, coperta di rovi e improduttiva (vv. 37-38). Per queste ragioni Giove è diventato, agli occhi di Natura, un duro e spietato tiranno (*durumque tyrannum / inmitemque*, vv. 34-35), qualifica che è tradizionalmente attribuita a Plutone e che lo stesso Claudiano impiega due volte, nel *De raptu*, per il dio degli Inferi (cf. I. 84 e II. 264).<sup>26</sup> Anche l'isterilimento della terra finisce per avvicinare Giove al fratello, il cui regno è appunto contraddistinto dalla più totale infecondità. Il compromesso consiste, dunque, in un ammorbidimento che riguarda entrambi: Plutone conoscerà l'amore e, una volta ottenuto ciò

<sup>24</sup> Egli esita soltanto sulla scelta della sposa (I. 118-121). Sulla contraddizione esistente tra questi versi e quanto detto poco oltre, a I. 217-219, cf. Gruzelier 1993, p. 109.

<sup>25</sup> Il modello è da riconoscersi in Verg. *georg.* I. 125 ss.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Onorato 2008, p. 299, che rileva l'ascendenza virgiliana del nesso *tyrannum inmitem* (cf. *georg.* IV. 492).

che ha richiesto, dovrà accontentarsi di tornare a governare sul *Chaos*; Giove, dal canto suo, continuerà a regnare sul mondo ordinato, ma a patto di una maggiore benevolenza nei confronti degli uomini. E non sarà nemmeno casuale che all'epiteto *inimicus* con cui Natura chiama Giove faccia riscontro il suo contrario, *mitior*, che Claudiano ha impiegato per qualificare Plutone dopo il rapimento, al momento dell'ingresso nel Tartaro (cf. II. 307).<sup>27</sup> E anche l'isterilimento della terra prodotto dal comportamento di Giove suona in contrasto con la ben nota prolificità del Padre degli Dei, alla quale, come detto, lo stesso Plutone fa esplicito riferimento all'inizio del poema. Tra la sterilità della terra e quella di Plutone c'è una sottile corrispondenza: assecondando la richiesta del fratello, Giove dà realizzazione a un piano più ampio, che passa, quindi, anche attraverso una generale attenuazione dell'infertilità.

Il dono delle messi che Cerere farà agli uomini come ricompensa per la gioia di aver ritrovato la figlia dopo lungo peregrinare avrà, infatti, tra i suoi effetti quello di trasformare il paesaggio terrestre rendendolo finalmente lo spazio ordinato e organizzato dell'agricoltura.<sup>28</sup> Ma questo significherà riaffermare senza ambiguità la separazione tra il mondo dei vivi, al quale l'intervento dell'uomo conferisce una forma razionale e un aspetto esteticamente piacevole, e il regno dei morti, dominato dalla desolazione, dall'aridità, dalla mancanza di ordine, in una parola dal *Chaos*. Si può ricordare, in proposito, come, tra gli aggettivi con i quali Catone, nel celebre discorso del *De coniuratione Catilinae* sallustiano, qualifica gli Inferi, figure anche *incultus*,<sup>29</sup> a testimonianza che, secondo la visione propria della cultura latina, l'idea stessa di paesaggio s'identifica con lo spazio trasformato e regolato dall'attività umana per eccellenza: la coltivazione dei campi.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Il cambio d'atteggiamento di Giove è segnalato dallo stesso dio, che si definisce, poco oltre, *tandem clementior orbi* (III. 46). Sulla *clementia* di Giove cf. Guipponi-Gineste 2010, p. 39 e Kellner 1997, pp. 225-226.

<sup>28</sup> Il tema avrebbe dovuto essere trattato nel IV libro del *De raptu*.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Sall. *Cat.* 52. 13. Per quest'accezione dell'aggettivo cf. ThLL VII.1, col. 1070, 62-70.

<sup>30</sup> Si vedano, al riguardo, le osservazioni avanzate da Borca 1995 e 1997 in relazione al paesaggio palustre e a quello germanico, entrambi rappresentativi di un paradigma antitetico al paesaggio culturale (tipicamente, nella percezione dei Romani, quello mediterraneo) contraddistinto innanzitutto dalla presenza di terre coltivate; in relazione alla palude lo studioso osserva che 'il Cosmo



Nell'accordare una sposa a Plutone, Giove, diventato più benigno, ribadisce così la necessità che i due regni non si confondano: dire che la guerra minacciata dagli Inferi deve essere scongiurata per evitare che l'universo precipiti di nuovo nella confusione primordiale significa affermare la necessità che il *Chaos* non contaminì la terra, che deve rimanere ben distinta dall'aldilà. Perché questo sia possibile, occorrerà superare la fase attuale, nella quale, secondo i rimproveri mossi a Giove, la natura selvaggia sta modificando l'aspetto del mondo dei vivi. Solo quando la terra sarà coltivata, essa potrà veramente differenziarsi dall'oltretomba, con i suoi spazi vuoti e informi. Ristabilire un nuovo ordine vuol dire, dunque, portare a definitivo compimento il processo di separazione delle cose iniziato nella notte dei tempi con la nascita stessa dell'universo, quando tutto non era che *Chaos*.

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della città e della campagna coltivata si affianca, pur differenziandosene, al Caos incolto, esteticamente "brutto", estraneo all'intervento modificatore e informatore operato dalla cultura' (Borca 1995, p. 248); quanto alla Germania, basterà osservare, ancora con Borca 1997, pp. 42-45, come una delle sue tipiche caratteristiche consista nell'essere informe (così la definisce Tacito in *Germ.* 2. 2).

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### Abstract

*Chaos* occurs three times in *De raptu Proserpinae*, where it always denotes the Underworld. Both in the *peplopoiia* and in the Council of the Gods convened by Jupiter, Claudian represents the universe with its division between the ordered (celestial and terrestrial) spaces, the realm of Jupiter, and the chaotic spaces of the Underworld, the realm of Pluto. But in *De raptu* these places undergo a metamorphosis which puts their very survival at risk. In fact, thanks to the two brothers' agreement and the consequent sacrifice of Proserpina, the transformation turns into a general attenuation of the infertility which characterizes not only the Underworld, *loca inculta* by nature,

but also the earth, which becomes more sterile, according to *Natura*'s reproaches of Jupiter. But Jupiter's choice of offering his daughter in marriage to Pluto will also result in the gift of the harvest from Ceres: thanks to agriculture, the earth will finally acquire the aspect of a rationally ordered and aesthetically pleasing place and, therefore, will distinguish itself from the Underworld again.

*TITULI* FOR ILLITERATES?  
THE (SUB-)GENRE OF *TITULI*  
*HISTORiarum* BETWEEN  
*EKPHRASIS*, ICONOGRAPHY  
AND CATECHESIS

As is well known, at the end of the fourth century Western Christian art overcame its symbolic, signitive origins and developed a pronounced narrative character, coherently with specific narrative tendencies of Roman art itself.<sup>1</sup> Basilicas began to be decorated with depictions of biblical episodes,<sup>2</sup> visually representing the development of salvation history.

The Old Testament fresco cycle of Old Saint Peter's in Rome has been lately dated to the third quarter of the fourth century,<sup>3</sup> while Paulinus of Nola's *Carmen* 27 (AD 403) attests the presence of scenes from the Pentateuch (ll. 516–517) on the walls of Cimitile's *basilica noua*; his testimony is particularly interesting due to the explicit assertion that these images were accompanied by *tituli*. As Paulinus explains to Nicetas, the majority of pilgrims travelling to Nola to worship St. Felix's tomb were sincerely faithful, albeit illiterate (ll. 547–548: *turba frequentior hic est / rusticitas non cassa fide neque docta legendi*) and used to pagan forms of devotion; for Paulinus, the best way to restrain the pilgrims from excessive libations was to focus their attention on inspiring episodes of Holy history, using the seductive means of colorful paintings surmounted by *tituli* (ll. 580–584). We do not know whether or not these *tituli* were metrical, and we ignore their level of complexity, but due to their popular destination they were probably very simple inscriptions, different from those conceived for the apses of Nola and

<sup>1</sup> Brilliant 1984, pp. 53–165; Kessler 2007, pp. 114–116.

<sup>2</sup> Kessler 1994, pp. 1–26; 357–379; van Dael 1999; Bisconti 2002.

<sup>3</sup> Kessler 1999; Proverbio 2010, pp. 544–547.

Fundi of *Epistula* 32, but at the same time not reducible to mere ‘Namensbeischriften’,<sup>4</sup> since in *carm.* 28. 20 the name tags accompanying the *martyres* [...] *picti* on the main entrance of St. Felix’s basilica are called *nomina*.<sup>5</sup>

The presence of written captions in a visual display dedicated to illiterates should not be seen as a contradiction:<sup>6</sup> in Paulinus’ elaborate formulation (ll. 584–585: *ut littera monstret / quod manus explicuit*), *littera* is endowed with a mainly deictic function, while images cover not an ostensive, but rather an explicatory role, functional to narrative development.<sup>7</sup> The bishop seems to find no contrast between the assumption that the population was for the most part *non docta legendi* (l. 548), and the use of the verbs *relegere* and *legere* for the decoding activity. Text and image were both part of a multimodal catechetical display, and I am inclined to believe that Paulinus interpreted reading to be the deciphering of the ‘mixed medium’ (l. 585: *picta*) constituted by the mutual interaction of image – in this case surely hierarchically preeminent – and text. With specific regard to the written words, three aspects should be considered:

- Paulinus does not primarily focus on individual reading skills, which were the patrimony of few in the Nolan suburbs at the beginning of the fifth century;<sup>8</sup> on the contrary, he alludes to a collective form of reading, which exploits the social function of literacy and which I would call ‘communitarian’ (ll. 585–586: *omnes picta uicissim / [...] relegunt sibi*);
- being aware of the numerous and sometimes elusive nuances of reading skills in Late Antiquity, we can imagine that simple labels could be deciphered even by semi-literates with no rhetorical learning;

<sup>4</sup> Lehmann 2010, p. 124.

<sup>5</sup> Herbert de la Portbarré-Viard 2006 correctly distinguishes between the simple ‘matériel épigraphique’ (p. 376) of *carm.* 28. 20 and the *tituli* ‘commentant les scènes bibliques’ (p. 346) of *Carmen* 27.

<sup>6</sup> Brenk 2005, p. 151, n. 40: ‘It may be noted that Paulinus says at the beginning that the peasants are not able to read, but at the end of the text he all of a sudden says *ostendunt releguntque sibi* (namely the *tituli*, line 586). It becomes clear that Paulinus’ explanation of the function of the image was invented *ad hoc*’; cf. also Kässer 2010, pp. 159–160.

<sup>7</sup> Pietri 1988, p. 150; Cavallo 1994, p. 37.

<sup>8</sup> On the crucial, often neglected aspect of the illiterate’s use of another’s literacy for access to the written tradition cf. Bäuml 1980; Cavallo 2004.

- in any case, the mere presence of written words within a monumental decoration (even if unreadable because of size, location or position) was highly symbolic, and could confer authoritative power on the visual narrative, particularly for the unlettered.<sup>9</sup>

When we reflect on the role of pictorial narrative in the construction of an ‘average catechetical horizon’ in post-Constantinian basilicas (besides their monumental-decorative role, pictures were invested with an instructional function<sup>10</sup>, not differently from verbal forms of catechesis<sup>11</sup>), we should not underestimate the fact that this aim was not entirely fulfilled by images themselves.

Notwithstanding that an image is never perceived in total isolation, but always within a framed context, ‘enveloped’ by verbal semiosis<sup>12</sup> (in our case, essentially the words of predication,<sup>13</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Camille 1985; for the Greek Late Antiquity cf. Agosti 2010, pp. 176–180; Rhoby 2012.

<sup>10</sup> On the catechetical function of Christian art cf. Quacquarelli 1989a; Bisconti 1989; Murray 1993; Cantino Wataghin 2011, pp. 28–29. For the pre-Constantinian period, it is much more difficult to delineate a precise catechetical dimension for images – at that time mainly funeral – following the old theory of Wilpert (Martimort 1949). Despite any analogy in subject, and also the *e negatiuo* testimony of Canon 36 of the Council of Elvira, in most cases Christian funerary images were only accessible by the private groups who commissioned them (Carletti 1989; Cantino Wataghin 2001).

<sup>11</sup> Bal 1989, p. 291: ‘Images are readings, and [...] function in the same way as sermons: not a re-telling of the text but a use of it; not an illustration but, ultimately, a new text. The image does not replace a text; it is one’.

<sup>12</sup> Schapiro 1985, pp. 7–16; Butor 1992, pp. 9–10; pp. 94–107; Schellewald 1992. On the importance of recognition in the interpretation of Christian art cf. Engemann 1997, p. 31: ‘Den Inhalt und die Bedeutung von bildlichen Darstellungen können nicht nur Analphabeten, sondern auch lesefähige Bildbetrachter nur dann erkennen, wenn sie ihnen erklärt werden oder wenn sie sie zuvor in Texten gelesen haben’; on such ‘recognition dispositives’ cf. also Cavallo 1994, p. 38.

<sup>13</sup> A strong stress on the partial invisibility of many Christian images, as well as on their incomprehensibility for most churchgoers, in Brenk 2005; but if we believe that images co-operated with other forms of catechesis, as Brenk also underlines (p. 148), I think we could be less skeptical than him on their catechetical role, for Brenk ‘nothing more than a wishful thinking of some ecclesiastics’ (p. 147): the aim of the images was not so much to ‘indoctrinate believers’ (p. 150), i.e. to elaborate autonomous catechetical messages, but rather to co-operate with other catechetical forms in strengthening the instruction of the faithful. On the interaction of verbal and visual *ἐνάργεια* in the strengthening of the catechetical message in the Cappadocian Fathers’ thought, Lange 1969, pp. 13–38 is fundamental.

mediated by the clergy<sup>14</sup>), *tituli* also played a role in iconographic decoding,<sup>15</sup> a process resulting from the reciprocal, and not simply overlapping, integration of verbal and visual elements. The main function of *tituli* was to restrict the freedom of viewers,<sup>16</sup> and help in covering the hermeneutic gap<sup>17</sup> always inherent in unmediated paintings, whose hermeneutic of ‘calculated misunderstanding’ always ran the risk of remaining obscure or, even worse, being falsely self-explanatory.

*Tituli* did not arouse much scholarly interest until recently, when they underwent a partial rediscovery, thanks in part to a renewed theoretical attention on the visual-written interaction in the scopic regime of Late Antiquity.<sup>18</sup> In a recent contribution, Herbert L. Kessler admitted, ‘The recent preoccupation with art’s storytelling capacities, my own included, has tended to ignore the function of captions that almost always accompany pictured narratives and the complex issues those raise for reading history paintings’.<sup>19</sup>

Considering the Roman West between the end of the fourth and the beginning of the sixth century, and limiting our analysis to the cycles transmitted by non-epigraphic sources, we possess four series of *tituli historiarum*, namely Ambrose’s *Disticha*, ps.-Claudian’s *Miracula Christi*, Prudentius’ *Dittochaeon* and Rusticus Helpidius’ *Tristicha de ueteri et nouo Testamento*. Despite their shortness, these works are quite interesting due to their plurivocal literary status: indebted to the Damasian introduction of a peculiar kind of Christian monumental epigraphic poetry, they represent a case of *carmina ‘epigraphico more’*, showing a particular aspect of the interaction between epigraphy and literature ‘with epigraphic format’ in Late Antiquity;<sup>20</sup> they make use of

<sup>14</sup> As an interesting example of such interactions between iconography and homiletic, Pietri 1988, pp. 149–150 recalls a passage of the *De uirtutibus sancti Martini* (I. 2), where Gregory of Tours makes a comparison between two miracles, the saving of Peter from drowning and a similar wonder by Martin, both represented in Tours cathedral in mosaics accompanied by inscriptions, from which Gregory’s predication seems largely inspired.

<sup>15</sup> Mazzoleni 1993; Favreau 1996.

<sup>16</sup> Jäggi 2009; Kessler 2009, p. 39.

<sup>17</sup> Morrison 1988, pp. 269–280.

<sup>18</sup> Mostert 2012, pp. 55–57; 115–117.

<sup>19</sup> Kessler 2009, p. 25.

<sup>20</sup> Mayer – Miró – Velaza 1998, pp. 23–85.



the stylistic means of epigrammatic *forma brevis*,<sup>21</sup> and are thematically akin to biblical paraphrases, of which they seem to be a hyper-abbreviated version,<sup>22</sup> but with specific peculiarities, since their aim is to describe art objects: from this aspect, they should be placed in the broader group of the so-called *Bildertituli*,<sup>23</sup> and in particular within the (minor) category that shows a preponderant interest in the content of the representation.<sup>24</sup>

In particular, I believe that our *tituli* should be at best considered examples of ‘notional *ekphrasis*’:<sup>25</sup> in the impossibility to determine whether they have effectively been used to accompany depictions (three of them are conveyed only by a sixteenth-century edition, and only for the *Disticha* are we informed of a supposedly precise collocation<sup>26</sup>), it may be more productive to investigate how they ‘construct’<sup>27</sup> their pictorial referent, realizing their typical inter-medial hybridization<sup>28</sup> and giving rise to the hermeneutic cooperation of the reader, who mobilizes the cultural competences activated by the text’s *Appellstruktur* in order to supplement the visual element.<sup>29</sup> Some of these characteristics are as follows:

- juxtaposition of autonomous, independent epigrams, fully comprehensible in isolation and yet together constituting a more

<sup>21</sup> Nosarti 2010, pp. 49–64.

<sup>22</sup> Kartschoke 1975, pp. 111–114 (the *Miracula Christi* are considered ‘Extremfälle kürzender Bibelparaphrase’); Charlet 1985, p. 636; Kässer 2010, pp. 162–165.

<sup>23</sup> Bernt 1968, pp. 21; pp. 30–37; Lausberg 1982, pp. 191–192; pp. 219–223.

<sup>24</sup> This is a certainly minor group (Kässer 2010, pp. 152–153), but it did exist: cf. Lubian 2013, pp. 217–224.

<sup>25</sup> Hollander 1988; Cometa 2012, pp. 48–62.

<sup>26</sup> de La Bigne 1589, coll. 1203–1204: *Incipiunt Disticha Sancti Ambrosii de diuersis rebus, quae in basilica Ambrosiana scripta sunt*. Among other elements, the precise determination of the place where the *tituli* were situated could be a hint of their ‘real’ epigraphic nature (Pietri 1988, pp. 144–148); this particular seems to be far more important than the supposed ‘purely illustrative’ nature of the *Disticha* (Roncoroni 1975, pp. 218–219; Arnulf 1997, p. 112).

<sup>27</sup> Angehrn 1995.

<sup>28</sup> Clüver 1998; Rajewsky 2005; Lobato 2010.

<sup>29</sup> On the forms of hermeneutic integration implied by any reading process cf. Iser 1974; Eco 1995, pp. 325–328; Cometa 2012, pp. 116–142; particularly illuminating are Eco’s later reflections (Eco 2002, pp. 191–214), on the ‘semantic-pragmatic’ nature of descriptions and of the reading strategies implied by ὑποτύπωσις.

complex unity. This feature corresponds to a more general evolution from single descriptive epigrams ('self-standing *ekphrasis*') into collections, where the discreteness of individual poems is not undermined by their inseparability from other surrounding ones;<sup>30</sup>

- adoption of the dactylic meter, which best fits the narrative;
- remarkable predilection for the present, the commentative tense of the *besprochene Welt*, typical of captions and titles of works of art,<sup>31</sup> with the employment of relative priority to create a *mise en relief*-effect for the antecedents;
- broad use of specific textual markers such as the adverb *ecce*, temporal and local deictics, and demonstrative adjectives and pronouns;<sup>32</sup>
- typically didactic exhortations (Ambr. *tituli* 13: *uos discite, uates*; 39: *aspice*);
- allocutive forms, both intra- and extra-diegetic (Ps. Claud. *carm. min. app.* 21. 3; Prud. *ditt.* 149–150), introducing a dramatic or meta-narrative element;
- verbs such as *apparet* (Prud. *ditt.* 151) or *aspice* (Ambr. *tituli* 39), which summon the spectator to more attentive contemplation.

It is also important to investigate how descriptive, spatial-dominant enunciations are arranged within a narrative, temporal-linear sequence:<sup>33</sup>

- the mere presence of a chronological order reveals a narrative development. At the same time, a narrative articulation is also conveyed in the synchronic context of every *titulus* (e.g.: Rust. *Help. hist. testam.* 1, where the apple of Gen. 3. 6 is called *uetitum*, with an analectic reference to the forbidden fruit of Gen 2. 17);
- in the *Dittochaeon* and the *Tristicha*, the typological interconnection between Old and New Testament episodes (emerging through the smallest details, such as the use of the word *crux* for Moses' stab of Num 21. 4–9 in Prud. *ditt.* 48) reveal what I would call 'typological patterns' that interfere with the chronological order.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Elsner 2002, pp. 9–13.

<sup>31</sup> Weinrich 1985, pp. 42–46.

<sup>32</sup> Mengaldo 2005, pp. 28–29.

<sup>33</sup> Segre 2003, pp. 39–108.

<sup>34</sup> For the role of typology as a form of textual interrelation, cf. Michel 1992, pp. 51–60; for the *tituli* also Lubian 2013, pp. 224–227.

In a study of the *tituli*, it is also important to precisely delineate the role played by intra-medial relations (i.e. intertextuality<sup>35</sup>): here I would like to provide an example, taken from Prudentius, *ditt.* 33–36.

Tutus agit uir iustus iter uel per mare magnum.  
Ecce Dei famulis scissim freta rubra dehiscunt,  
cum peccatores rabidos eadem freta mergant:  
obruitur Farao, patuit uia libera Moysi.<sup>36</sup>

The first line is exemplar for its multiple allusions to classical poetry. Unlike Renate Pillinger, I do not believe that the poet, with the expression *uir iustus*, simply alludes to Moses;<sup>37</sup> the prophet certainly remains the main referent of the expression (Aug. *in psalm.* 128. 6 *Moyses [...] bonus et iustus famulus Dei*), but this gnomic introduction is also functional to the moralization of the faithful, who are asked to identify themselves in the biblical character.

An allusion to Hor. *carm.* I. 22. 1–6 has been assumed by scholars,<sup>38</sup> and Kurt Smolak convincingly saw a motivation for such reprise in the Horatian reference to the dangerous Syrtian Gulf.<sup>39</sup>

It has not yet been noted that this *sententia* on the wise man's ἀπάθεια seems to be affected by the tropological exegesis (veined by a Stoic influence) of the same episode of Ambrose's *Commentary on Ps 118*. For the Bishop, who also refers to Cant 8. 7, Moses proved *secundum litteram* that the man who loves God has nothing to fear, because his life is an unflappable route even amid the sea of disruption (*in psalm.* 118 21. 16):

Qui deum diligit, profunda est in eo confirmatae mentis  
tranquillitas. [...] Multa aqua diuersarum est passionum et  
flumina saecularium cupiditatum corporalibus motibus inci-  
tata, quae tamen murum caritatis subuertere non possunt.

<sup>35</sup> Nazzaro 1993.

<sup>36</sup> Bergman 1926, p. 437.

<sup>37</sup> Pillinger 1980, p. 37: 'Das Volk Israel, hier repräsentiert durch Moses, ist *iustus* und deshalb auch *tutus*'.

<sup>38</sup> Argenio 1967, p. 45; Pillinger 1980, p. 37.

<sup>39</sup> Smolak 2010, p. 174.

[...] Numquid aqua maris excludere Moysi potuit caritatem?  
 Vt et secundum litteram tibi Psalmorum series suffragetur,  
 nempe diligens deum tutum sibi credidit iter esse per maria;  
 qui autem non dilexerunt deum, hi demersi fluctibus dignum  
 sacrilegiis suis exitum pertulerunt.

The *clausula* already appeared in the famous description of Xerses' march over the Hellespont of the *De rerum natura* (III. 1029–1030 *Ille quoque ipse, uiam qui quondam per mare magnum / strauit iterque dedit legionibus ire per altum*); in addition, we cannot exclude that Prudentius had in his ears (also) Verg. *Aen.* v. 628–629.<sup>40</sup> But, beyond any formal analogy, Prudentius seems to entertain a more profound bond with the Lucretian intertext: surely with the third book, where Xerses exemplifies the inevitability of death even for the mighty and kings,<sup>41</sup> but perhaps also with the beginning of the second one, where the Epicurean doctrine of ἀταραξία is represented in the famous scene of the safe contemplation of the tempestuous sea from the shore (II. 1–2 *Suaue mari magno turbantibus aequora uentis / e terra magnum alterius spectare laborem*). Prudentius' *uir iustus* is kept safe (*tutus*) by God even if he goes through the stormy sea: I believe that the implicit contrast to Lucretius and his eminently contemplative concept of imperturbability could enlighten the pregnant value of the concessive *uel* at l. 33.

In the end, we need to address a fundamental question: is it plausible that at least some *tituli* were really intended as catechetical instruments? For what public? We have some evidence that, at least until the end of what Peter Brown called 'spättere Spätantike',<sup>42</sup> the unlettered were not totally excluded from public displays of high poetry: I am thinking of the famous lecture of his *Historia apostolica* given by Arator on the steps of Saint Peter *ad Vincula* in Rome (AD 544). The response was enthusiastic, and the whole poem was read in four sessions, interrupted by frequent requests for explanation, as recorded in a *subscriptio* present in part of the manuscript tradition.<sup>43</sup> As already

<sup>40</sup> Mahoney 1934, p. 125; Schwen 1937, p. 111.

<sup>41</sup> Smolak 2010, p. 175.

<sup>42</sup> Brown 1999, p. 17.

<sup>43</sup> McKinlay 1951, p. 73; Châtillon 1963, p. 73; a rigorous re-examination of the manuscripts seems necessary.

seen, in some circumstances groups of churchgoers could have also been accompanied by guides (*aeditui*, *ostiarii*, ὁδηγοί) who read inscriptions aloud for them,<sup>44</sup> in a sort of ‘collective reading’. Despite our almost complete lack of testimonies of such practices,<sup>45</sup> we cannot exclude their possible application to epigraphic *tituli*. Different, but worth mentioning is also the form of oral supplementation described by Prudentius in *Peristephanon* 9. Startled by an image of St. Cassian which he found difficult to interpret, the poet listens to the explanation of the verger, who, both competent and prompt to answer to his requests (l. 17: *aedituus consultus*),<sup>46</sup> translated the depiction of martyrdom into verbal narrative. If the same *historia* was transmitted by images and books (ll. 19–20: *Historiam pictura refert, quae tradita libris / ueram uetusti temporis monstrat fidem*), it would be an error to consider words and images virtually identical and the role of picture as unproblematic referential: an image is still inevitably different from a text, precisely because of its self-ostensive, and not explanatory, nature; for this reason Prudentius needed the supplying intervention of the verger to understand the elements that could not be inferred from the painting.<sup>47</sup> The existence of such mediated fruition practices may contribute to explain how ‘real’ *tituli* could function as catechetical dispositives even for the unlettered, and to better determine the cultural landscape in which also non-epigraphic *tituli* were conceived.

To provisionally conclude: in the light of the attested diffusion of *tituli* with biblical theme in the Western Late Antiquity,

<sup>44</sup> Pietri 1988, pp. 148–150; Cavallo 1994, pp. 51–52. Sartori 2005, pp. 94–96 described the uninstitutional role of such an interpreter, ‘disposto a spiegare, o letteralmente a dispiegare, a stendere in chiarezza il testo epigrafico’, in a collective reading which also has the function ‘di aiutarne la comprensione tra gli ascoltatori in reciproca collaborazione’. For the Byzantine world cf. Agosti 2010, pp. 177–178; Rhoby 2012, p. 741.

<sup>45</sup> For the Roman world, one should also consider the Pompeian fresco of the *domus Iuliae Felicis* (n. 4. 3), where a group of people is reading not a roll, as is usually intended (Sampaolo 1991, pp. 256–257, plate 122), but an epigraph; or CLE 982, 10–12 (Sartori 2005).

<sup>46</sup> Something similar in Gregory of Tours’ *Liber de uirtutibus Sancti Iuliani* (2): the *aedituus* of St. Férriol’s basilica in Vienne explains to Gregory, who was visiting the church, the meaning of the *uersiculos* [...] *conscriptos* of the triumphal arch (*Cumque haec legens aedituum consulerem, cur haec scripta sic fuerint, respondit*).

<sup>47</sup> Roberts 1993, pp. 137–144; Kässer 2002, pp. 165–169.

while at the same time attempting to avoid any simplistic, reductive or arbitrary argument on the ‘real’ relationship between our four epigrammatic cycles and their iconographies,<sup>48</sup> given the absence of testimonies and/or any extra-textual support for their epigraphic materialization I believe that our texts, with the possible exception of Ambrose’s *Disticha*,<sup>49</sup> could be tentatively defined ‘possibly-real notional *ekphraseis*’, i.e. realistic examples of *tituli* which could have accompanied plausible Western iconographic cycles from the end of the fourth century onwards; in this sense, the probability that they were not composed for an epigraphic use does not prevent us to consider them the product of a peculiar Late Antique intermediality, which activates the readers’ integrative competences and bases its plausibility on contemporary forms of visual/verbal integration.

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### *Abstract*

The paper is devoted to the literary (sub-)genre of *tituli historiarum*, cycles of epigrams illustrating Old and New Testament episodes. A survey of the testimonies concerning Late Antique interactions between written and visual media is followed by a reflection on the nuanced reading practices implied by epigraphic captions; by highlighting the *tituli*'s main stylistic features, and without ignoring that we do not know whether the series transmitted by non-epigraphic sources (Ambrose's *Disticha*; Prudentius' *Dittochaeon*; *Miracula Christi*; Rusticus Helpidius' *Tristicha*) have ever been used as real captions, the author attempts to show how these texts 'construct' their pictorial referent and activate the hermeneutic cooperation that leads to visualization. An example of commentary (Prud. *ditt.* IX) points out the role played by intramediality (i.e. intertextuality) in this literary form.

FRANCA ELA CONSOLINO

LE MOT ET LES CHOSES :  
*EPIGRAMMA*  
CHEZ SIDOINE APOLLINAIRE

Dans son bel essai de 1993 sur les *elegi acuti* de Sidoine Apollinaire, Isabella Gualandri rappelle bien à propos le ‘significato vario e generico che la parola *epigramma* può assumere presso di lui : talvolta indica semplicemente una composizione poetica, non necessariamente in distici, e non necessariamente breve ; talvolta sembra riferita ad iscrizioni in versi, non esclusivamente in distici ; talvolta infine a carmi in distici, anche epigrafici’.<sup>1</sup> Mais s’il est incontestable et incontesté que chez Sidoine le mot *epigramma* peut se référer à des poèmes de quelque extension, on peut tout de même se demander si dans son cas cette dernière acception du terme peut être mise en rapport avec la forme canonisée de l’épigramme qui se réclame de Martial et, en particulier, avec l’*epigramma longum*.

Luca Mondin – dans une contribution de la plus grande conséquence pour les études sur l’épigramme latine tardive – a donné une réponse affirmative à cette question et a reconnu à notre auteur un rôle primordial dans l’expansion de cette catégorie littéraire qui, dans la *Spätantike*, aurait étendu son domaine, ‘includendo, insieme a poesie dalla canonica forma epigrammatica, anche prodotti testuali ad essa eccentrici o addirittura estranei’ et par conséquent ‘alcuni dei consueti requisiti venivano disattesi, ivi compreso quello fra tutti peculiare della *brevitas*, fino a far corrispondere al nome di *epigramma*, o alla funzione gene-

<sup>1</sup> Gualandri 1993, p. 213 ; les passages de Sidoine sont indiqués et en l’occurrence discutés aux notes 86-89.

ralmente assolta dall'épigramma, testi dall'impianto formale assai poco "épigrammatico".<sup>2</sup>

Face aux résultats de cette riche et minutieuse enquête, on ne saurait sous-estimer la diffusion du terme *epigramma* pour désigner des réalités hétérogènes ; néanmoins, il reste à vérifier si la défense de l'*epigramma longum* faite par Martial a joué un rôle (et lequel) dans l'élargissement de la catégorie d'épigramme, ou s'il faut chercher ailleurs le point de départ de cette évolution, qui aurait en Sidoine le meilleur des témoins.<sup>3</sup> Etant donné son importance par rapport à ce problème et sa sensibilité aux questions littéraires, je m'arrêterai donc sur cet auteur pour examiner les indications – théoriques et pratiques – qu'on glane dans ses pages et, avant tout, les quatorze passages où revient le mot *epigramma*, terme grec qui, en latin, lorsqu'il se réfère à un texte en vers, peut indiquer ou une inscription en vers ou n'importe quel *poemation brevis vel lepidum*.<sup>4</sup>

### 1. *Epigramma dans l'acception spécialisée que le terme a chez Martial*

Dans une épître écrite en 477/478, Sidoine chante les louanges des qualités littéraires de son ami, le rhéteur Lampridius, dont il vient d'apprendre l'assassinat. Après en avoir exalté la parfaite maîtrise de la technique oratoire et versificatrice, Sidoine lui attribue le rare mérite d'avoir toujours adhéré parfaitement aux règles de chaque genre littéraire pratiqué. Son éloge des épigrammes composées par le feu rhéteur nous renseigne donc sur ce qui doit caractériser une épigramme bien faite :<sup>5</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Mondin 2008, p. 466 s.

<sup>3</sup> Mondin 2008, p. 467 : 'La testimonianza nel contempo più precoce e più organica di questa evoluzione del concetto di *epigramma* è quella che fornisce Sidonio Apollinare parlando dei propri prodotti letterari, e in particolare dei componimenti poetici inseriti nel corpo di numerose epistole'.

<sup>4</sup> ThLL V.2, col. 666, 31-47 (1a 'de versibus, qui monumentis, signis, donis sim. inscripti sunt') et 48-84 (1b 'De quolibet brevis vel lepidum poematio'). Sur l'histoire du terme *epigramma* et sur la canonisation de la catégorie littéraire de l'épigramme voir Puelma 1997.

<sup>5</sup> *Epist.* VIII. 11. 7. Cette citation et les autres suivent le texte de Sidoine établi par Loyen 1960 et 1970.

Praeterea quod ad *epigrammata* spectat, non copia sed acumine placens, quae nec brevius disticho neque longius tetrasticho finiebantur, eademque cum non pauca piperata, mellea multa conspiceres, omnia tamen salsa cernebas.

Ce principe, qui veut parfaite l'épigramme qui sait se contenir dans la mesure de deux distiques au plus, et que Sidoine énonce ici, quelques années après l'édition définitive de son propre recueil, il l'avait lui-même mis en pratique quelques années auparavant dans *carm.* 19–21, et nous le trouvons aussi respecté dans deux autres pièces correspondant à cette typologie et qu'il définit comme *epigramma*.

La première est contenue dans une lettre de 469. Sidoine y qualifie d'*epigramma* le *tetrastichon* écrit sur une serviette qu'il dit avoir composé à la demande du sénateur Philomathius, dont le nom devait figurer dans le vers.<sup>6</sup> *Epigramma* est utilisé dans son sens le plus restrictif aussi dans une épître de 477, où Sidoine illustre à son jeune ami Burgundio une des typologies du vers rétrograde en ayant recours à un distique composé par lui-même au cours d'un voyage.<sup>7</sup> A cette première version de l'épigramme, l'auteur fait suivre le texte qu'on obtient en prenant les mots à l'envers, et il commente :

En habes versus, quorum syllabatim mirere rationem.  
Ceterum pompam, quam non habent, non docebunt.

Sidoine ne dit pas si l'absence de *pompa* dépend de son incapacité (ce serait encore une fois une déclaration de modestie), du genre littéraire pratiqué ou encore des complications techniques liées à l'usage des vers réciproques.

Les trois passages dont nous avons parlé adhèrent à un idéal de brièveté qui correspond à la pratique de Martial, mais aussi aux préférences d'Ausone, qui se rallie à la tradition grecque (plus rigoureuse que la latine en fait de brièveté): dans 62% environ des épigrammes du corpus de Z, la pièce ne dépasse pas

<sup>6</sup> *Epist.* v. 17. 10: *nec plus moratus mox suo scriba, qui pugillarem iuxta tenebat, ad me vocato subditum sic epigramma composui.*

<sup>7</sup> *Epist.* ix. 14. 5 *tali iocatus epigrammate [...]: Praecipiti modo quod decurrit tramite flumen / tempore consumptum iam cito deficiet.*

les 4 vers.<sup>8</sup> Par contre, l'usage de *lascivus* dans une lettre à Probus de 470/471 renvoie à la seule tradition latine de l'épigramme pour qualifier les compositions du poète épigrammatique et l'auteur exprime, par un adjectif, la caractéristique principale de chaque genre littéraire (*epist.* iv. 1. 2) : *si quid heroicus arduum, comicus lepidum, [...] epigrammatista lascivum [...] condiderunt*. C'est une définition chère à Martial qui, dès la préface en prose de son premier livre, justifiait par l'exemple de ses prédécesseurs latins la *lascivam verborum veritatem, id est epigrammaton linguam* en soulignant que c'est ainsi qu'écrit quiconque se fait lire et que l'auteur d'épigrammes doit parler sans pruderie (*Latine loqui*).<sup>9</sup> Mais l'adjectif ne renvoie pas seulement à Martial : Pline le Jeune aussi, dans son recueil épistolaire, sur lequel Sidoine a modelé le sien,<sup>10</sup> avait parlé de la *lascivia* (des mots et des situations), comme d'un trait caractérisant cette poésie mineure et dégagée qui était pratiquée à loisir même par les personnages les plus austères de la vie publique romaine.<sup>11</sup> Probus, le très docte destinataire de l'*epist.* iv. 1 qui, dès l'adolescence, s'était distingué par sa connaissance des règles auxquelles obéit chaque genre littéraire, ne pouvait l'ignorer.

Quant à la pratique de Sidoine lui-même, outre le *tetrastichon* pour Philomathius et le distique en vers rétrogrades, il nous a laissé trois épigrammes en deux distiques (*carm.* 19–21), une en six distiques sur les bains de sa villa (*carm.* 18), et une pièce en dix distiques au sénateur Ommatius (*carm.* 17), une *invitatio* qui reprend la tradition épigrammatique sur ce thème, et en particulier l'articulation de Mart. x. 48, une *invitatio* en douze distiques.<sup>12</sup> Pour le mètre et la pointe finale on pourrait aussi

<sup>8</sup> Mondin 2008, pp. 415 et 427.

<sup>9</sup> Voir Citroni 1975, pp. 9–11.

<sup>10</sup> *Epist.* i. 1. 1 *litterae [...] omnes [...] uno volumine includam [...] Gaii Plinii disciplinam maturitatemque vestigiis praesumptuosius insecuturus*; *epist.* iv. 22. 2 *Plinio ut discipulus assurgo*.

<sup>11</sup> *Plin. epist.* iv. 14. 4 *cogitare summos illos et gravissimos viros, qui talia scripserunt, non modo lascivia rerum, sed ne verbis quidem nudis abstinuisse*; *epist.* vii. 4. 6. 3 *lascivum inveni lusum Ciceronis*, où l'adjectif se réfère à une épigramme attribuée à Cicéron dans laquelle celui-ci se plaignait de ne pas avoir reçu de Tiron tous les baisers qu'il lui devait.

<sup>12</sup> L'influence de Mart. x. 48 est signalée per Gualandri 1993, p. 204; sur l'*invitatio* dans les épigrammes de Martial voir Merli 2008.



placer parmi les épigrammes le *carm.* 12, billet de récusation à Catullinus, en 19 hendécasyllabes phaléciens. Du point de vue formel, tous ces petits poèmes répondent à la forme d'épigramme canonisée par Martial, qu'on retrouve encore respectée par Ennode et plus encore dans le recueil de Luxorius. En revanche, la *lascivia* y est tout à fait absente.

## 2. Epigramma = *inscription métrique*

Sidoine est aussi l'auteur de quelques inscriptions en vers qu'il compose pour qu'elles soient gravées. Pour quelques-unes d'entre elles il a recours au terme *epigramma*. C'est le cas d'un petit poème en six distiques élégiaques (*epist.* iv. 8. 5) que son ami Evodius lui avait demandé pour le faire graver sur un grand vase en forme de coquille dont il voulait faire présent à la reine Ragnahilde (*epist.* iv. 8. 4) :

hoc poposcisti, ut *epigramma* transmitterem duodecim versi-  
bus terminatum, quod posset aptari conchae capaci, quae per  
ansarum latus utrumque in extimum gyri a rota fundi senis  
cavatur striaturis.

Les deux catégories des inscriptions métriques (*Steinepigramme*) et des épigrammes littéraires (*Buchepigramme*) se superposent dans cette épigramme dédicatoire qui se termine par une pointe : lorsque la reine y baignera sa face, la splendeur de son visage communiquera son éclat à l'argent. Cette jolie pièce, Sidoine souligne qu'il n'a pu la composer à loisir : c'est un impromptu qu'il a dû écrire sur-le-champ, sur la route de Lyon à Clermont.

Sidoine emploie encore *epigramma* au sens étymologique du terme, pour désigner les deux inscriptions en hexamètres que Constantius et Secundinus ont composées pour l'église bâtie par Patient de Lyon ; *epigramma* peut donc définir aussi le texte (l'auteur le déprécie en disant qu'il est murmuré par 'un pauvre petit chalumeau'<sup>13</sup>) que Sidoine lui-même a composé à la hâte

<sup>13</sup> *Paupertinus* [...] *cantilenae culmus*. Le terme *cantilena* ou son composé *cantilenosus* reviennent dans Sidoine cinq autres fois : *epist.* iii. 14. 1 *meas nugas sive confectas opere prosario seu poetarum stilo cantilenosas* ; *epist.* iv. 1. 2 *heroicus*

(c'est un *tumultuarium carmen*) pour l'abside de la même église, en choisissant l'hendécasyllabe phalécien pour ne pas faire piètre figure dans la comparaison avec ses doctes confrères (*epist.* II. 10. 4) :

Quapropter illorum iustius *epigrammata* micant quam *istaec*,  
quae imaginariae tantum et quodammodo umbratilitate effin-  
gimus. Sed quorsum ista? Quin potius *paupertinus* flagitatae  
*cantilena culmus* immurmuret.

Des trente vers de l'épigramme, les quatre premiers et les trois derniers encadrent la description : c'est la même technique de composition qu'on retrouve dans quelques *epigrammata longa* de Martial, qui chantent les louanges des villas de ses protecteurs. À côté de la présence générique de ce modèle, il y a le rappel spécifique d'une épigramme ekphrastique de Martial : les vers 22-27 du poème rapporté par l'*epist.* II. 10 sont en fait une reprise contrastive de Mart. IV. 64. 18-22, un *epigramma longum* écrit dans le même mètre : les bruits dont l'église retentit, et qui participent à la louange de Dieu, sont les mêmes qui ne parvenaient pas à pénétrer dans la villa de Julius Martialis sur le Janicule.<sup>14</sup>

Deux autres fois *epigramma* désigne une inscription métrique dans l'*epist.* IV. 18. 4-5 à Lucontius, qui avait demandé à Sidoine de lui envoyer – s'il en avait – toutes les bagatelles en vers composées après leur dernière rencontre (*si quas postea luserim metro nugas*). Notre auteur lui transmet alors le texte en distiques élégiaques qui va être gravé dans l'abside de la basilique de Saint Martin de Tours, entièrement reconstruite et agrandie par l'évêque Perpetuus.<sup>15</sup>

*arduum, comicus lepidum, lyricus cantilenosum*; *epist.* IV. 18. 6 *Obtulimus, ut cernis, quod cantilena recentis obvium manui fuit*; *epist.* V. 17. 11 *da postulatae tu veniam cantilena*; *epist.* VIII. 11. 2 *aliquid a me veterum flagitare cantilenarum*, où *cantilena* est toujours l'équivalent de *carmen, cantus* : ThLL III, col. 286, 36-39).

<sup>14</sup> Sur cette reprise, signalée tant par Friedlaender 1886 que par Geisler 1887, cf. Baker 1996, p. 40 s. et Fabbrini 2007, p. 26 s. Cette épigramme de Martial est familière à Sidoine qui s'en souvient aussi dans *carm.* 24. 83, où *sancta suscipit hospitalitate* reprend Mart. IV. 64. 28 *tam comi patet hospitalitate*. L'épigramme de Sidoine a été tout récemment analysée par Hecquet-Noti 2013.

<sup>15</sup> Sur cette inscription métrique et sa parenté avec d'autres destinées à des églises et qui ont été sûrement gravées, cf. Amherdt 2001, p. 401 s.; voir aussi Zarini 2002.

Huius [*scil.* *ecclesiae*] me parietibus inscribere supradictus sacerdos hoc *epigramma* compellit, quod recensebis [...]. Atque utinam molis illius pompam sive donaria nihil huius obsequii turpet oblatio; quod secus fore plurimum timeo, nisi forsitan inter omnia venusta sic *epigrammatis* istius foeditas placeat, ut niger naevus candido in corpore, qui quidem solet sic facere risum quod accipere suffragium. Sed quid hinc amplius? Pone fistulas ipse pastorias et elegiae nostrae, quia pede claudicat, manum porrige.

Loyen traduit *epigramma* par ‘petite pièce’, comme si le terme soulignait avec quelque coquetterie le peu de valeur du poème. Mais l’expression *parietibus inscribere*, en indiquant la destination des vers, montre comment Sidoine, qui a déjà confié sa déclaration de modestie coutumière à la définition de *carmen rusticorum et impositum* (§ 3), utilise le terme *epigramma* dans le sens spécifique et bien attesté d’inscription métrique que ce soit ici ou peu après, lorsqu’il songe à l’effet que son épigraphe va faire une fois placée dans l’église, où la pauvre qualité de son texte (§ 4 *epigrammatis istius foeditas*) sera rehaussée par les multiples beautés qui vont l’entourer (*inter omnia venusta*). Enfin, la représentation d’Elégie boiteuse au § 5 (*elegiae nostrae, quia pede claudicat, manum porrige*) – une image qui revient à Ovide – ne se limite pas probablement à témoigner que notre auteur partage avec son époque la tendance à identifier élégie avec épigramme,<sup>16</sup> mais elle suggère la différente longueur des deux vers du distique.<sup>17</sup> Par cette allusion au mètre, Sidoine introduit peut-être une distinction entre son épigramme et la poésie bucolique en hexamètres que, selon toute probabilité, Lucontius compose pendant un séjour à la campagne.

Sidoine composa aussi des inscriptions en vers qui ne sont jamais appelées *epigramma* dans les lettres qui nous ont transmis leur texte : ce sont l’épithaphe en 15 élégiaques pour le

<sup>16</sup> Gualandri 1993, p. 213 s. Les qualifications de *carmen* et *cantilena*, employées à propos de notre texte dans la conclusion de l’épître (*epist.* iv. 18. 6 *Obtulimus, ut cernis, quod cantilena recentis obvium manui fuit : sed nec hoc minus, si moras nectis, astra quatiemus, versibus quoque satirographis, si res exegerit, usuri, quos huic carmini lenitate adaequandos falso putabis*) sont purement dénotatives et ne modifient pas les termes de la question.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Amherdt 2001, p. 413 s.

saint confesseur Abraham (*epist.* vii. 17. 2), et les deux autres en hendécasyllabes phaléciens qu'il dédia à son grand-père (*epist.* iii. 12. 5 en 20 vers) et au frère de son ami Claudien Mamert (*epist.* iv. 11. 6 en 25 vers).

### 3. Epigramma = poème dépourvu de valeur et/ou d'importance, d'extension variable et en mètres divers

Bien avant Sidoine, faut-il le rappeler, le terme *epigramma* dans le discours littéraire et métalittéraire pouvait renvoyer à des typologies de compositions en vers bien différentes de celles dont Martial avait établi la morphologie et défini l'identité. Même abstraction faite de Catulle, il y avait les épigrammes grecques avant tout, à l'égard desquelles Martial avait voulu marquer sa différence ; et il y avait aussi toute une production de petits poèmes sans importance, écrits dans des mètres différents et d'extension variable, même si contenue. Pour les désigner, on disposait de plusieurs termes, vagues (*versiculi, ioci, nugae, ineptiae*), ou tout au plus génériques et perçus comme des synonymes d'*epigramma*. L'exemple peut-être le plus clair de cet usage est la présentation que Pline le Jeune fait de son recueil de poésie légère (*epist.* iv. 14. 8-9) :

Unum illud praedicendum videtur, cogitare me has meas nugas ita inscribere 'hendecasyllabi', qui titulus sola metri lege constringitur. Proinde, sive *epigrammata* sive idyllia sive eclogas sive, ut multi, poematia seu quod aliud vocare malueris, licebit voces, ego tantum hendecasyllabos praesto.

Mais Pline lui-même – qui ne l'utilise jamais pour ses compositions légères – emploie le terme *epigramma* dans une acception plus restrictive et spécialisée soit pour les épigrammes grecques composées par son ami Arrius Antoninus, soit pour l'épigramme osée de Cicéron sur Tiron.<sup>18</sup> Après lui Ausone, dans la postface à son *cento nuptialis*, utilise comme s'ils étaient interchangeables les trois termes *poematia, epigrammata* et *epyllia* pour les compositions érotiques respectivement de Pline le Jeune, d'Apulée et

<sup>18</sup> *Epist.* iv. 3. 3 *Graeca epigrammata tua* ; *epist.* iv. 18 1 *epigrammata tua Graeca* ; *epist.* vii. 4. 3 *epigramma Ciceronis in Tironem suum*.

de Platon.<sup>19</sup> Ausone qui, comme son contemporain Naucellius, se rattache à la tradition des épigrammes grecques plus qu'à la tradition latine de Martial, préfère ne pas donner le titre d'*epigrammata* aux deux recueils des *Parentalia* et des *Professores* qui, par leur extension parfois plus ample et grâce à l'adoption d'une plus riche variété de mètres, se détachent de la forme canonique de l'épigramme, tant grecque que latine.<sup>20</sup> Le mot *epigramma* n'arriva donc pas à Sidoine doté d'une acception univoque, mais chargé d'un héritage riche et complexe.<sup>21</sup>

*Epigramma* a la signification de petit poème sans importance dans 4 passages, venant de trois épîtres (deux attestations se trouvent dans la même lettre) du Livre IX, dans lesquelles Sidoine – évêque depuis quelques années – se réfère à ses compositions poétiques antérieures à son épiscopat.

Partons du cas le plus problématique, représenté par la signification qu'il faut donner au terme *epigramma* dans *epist.* VIII. 9. 5, envoyée en 476 à Lampridius, qui avait réclamé à Sidoine quelques-uns de ses vers. Ce rhéteur à succès s'était déjà gagné la faveur du roi des Wisigoths Euric, tandis que Sidoine, malgré ses efforts, n'avait pas réussi à obtenir d'Euric la restitution au moins d'une partie des biens de sa belle-mère. Il prie donc son ami de tenir compte de l'inquiétude dans laquelle il vit et que ressent le sujet du petit poème composé à sa demande (*epist.* VIII. 9. 3) :

Interim tu videris, quam tibi sit *epigrammatis* flagitati lemma placitum; me tamen nequaquam sollicitudo permittit aliud nunc habere in actione, aliud in carmine.

Le *flagitatum epigramma* est un poème de 59 hendécasyllabes phalécien. Sidoine l'ouvre en se plaignant de sa situation, qu'il compare à la tranquillité dont jouit son destinataire (vv. 1-20) ;

<sup>19</sup> Auson. *Cento*, p. 139, 3 ss. éd. Green 'lasciva est nobis pagina, vita proba', ut Martialis [l. 4. 8] dicit. Meminerint autem, quippe eruditi, probissimo viro Plinio in poematiis lasciviam, in moribus constitisse censuram, [...] esse Apuleium in vita philosophum, in epigrammatis amatorem, [...] Platonis Symposion composita in ephebos epyllia continere.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Consolino 2003, pp. 172-175 ; Mondin 2008, pp. 437-441.

<sup>21</sup> Sur la richesse d'implications et la partielle indétermination du terme *epigramma*, voir Citroni 2003.

il passe ensuite à la célébration de la puissance d'Euric (vv. 21-54) ; les cinq derniers vers soulignent la différence entre Lampadius, qui est déjà Tityre, et l'auteur, qui va devenir Mélibée. Même si son extension dépasse celle de l'*epigramma longum*, ce 'bref panégyrique' lui est proche par son mètre et sa structure, parce que, après une ample digression sur la grandeur du roi barbare, il se clôt sur une *pointe* qui se rattache à l'allusion virgilienne proposée par les premiers vers.<sup>22</sup>

A son ami Oresius, qui lui avait demandé de nouveaux chants, Sidoine répond que dès le début de son épiscopat il a renoncé à cet exercice littéraire, pour ne rien concéder à la futilité des vers qui ne convient pas à l'état clérical. En outre, il est difficile de reprendre une activité qu'on n'exerce plus depuis longtemps. Toutefois, comme il lui déplait de répondre par un refus, Sidoine trouve un compromis : il gardera le silence, qui dure depuis douze ans, mais s'il lui reste encore des lettres contenant des vers, écrites avant l'épiscopat, il les enverra à Oresius :<sup>23</sup>

Tenebimus igitur quippiam medium et sicut *epigrammata*  
recentia modo nulla dictabo, ita litteras, si quae iacebunt  
versu refertae, [...] mittam tibi.

Pas de doute qu'ici *epigramma* est un terme générique, par lequel Sidoine désigne tout poème qu'il peut avoir écrit lorsqu'il en composait.

Il en va de même pour l'emploi d'*epigramma* dans *epist.* ix. 16. 3, qui est la toute dernière du livre, et qui contient ce qui passe pour être le testament politique et littéraire de Sidoine : un poème de 84 vers en strophes saphiques. L'auteur y retrace sa vie et ses succès littéraires et politiques. En s'arrêtant quelque peu sur son œuvre de poète, il regrette d'avoir occupé sa jeunesse en de futils badinages dont il éprouve maintenant de la honte. Se rapprochant de la vieillesse, il a exclu tout exercice littéraire différent de l'épistolographie, pour que sa réputation de poète ne nuise pas à son image de rigoureux homme d'Église

<sup>22</sup> La définition de 'kurzer Panegyricus auf Eurich' est due à Henke 2007, p. 227.

<sup>23</sup> *Epist.* ix. 12. 3, écrite entre 478 et 480.

(*clerici ne quid maculet rigorem / fama poetae*: vv. 55-56 s.). Enfin, il ne pourra pas être de sitôt contraint à composer quelque poème que ce soit (vv. 57-60):<sup>24</sup>

Denique ad quodvis *epigramma* posthac  
non ferar pronus, teneroque metro  
vel gravi nullum cito cogar exhinc  
promere carmen.

Pour cette strophe, deux interprétations sont possibles. La première est que la phrase *tenero [...] carmen* répète avec une variation qui est aussi une explication le même propos exprimé par *denique [...] pronus*, et donc *epigramma* est pour ainsi dire glosé par le très générique *carmen* : dans ce cas la spécification *tenero metro vel gravi* fait rentrer dans la définition d'*epigramma* tout poème composé en vers élégiaques ou en hexamètres. Une deuxième interprétation possible est que *quodvis epigramma* indique des compositions poétiques sans importance, auxquelles le poète ajoute et oppose des compositions de plus haut niveau. En tout cas, l'acception d'*epigramma* reste très générique, comme est générique celle qui se trouve dans *epist.* ix. 13 à Tonantius.

Celui-ci avait prié Sidoine de lui envoyer quelques asclépiades composés à la manière d'Horace, qu'il aurait dû réciter *inter bibendum*.<sup>25</sup> Du contexte convivial auquel la pièce est destinée, on peut déduire qu'il s'agit de poésie légère ressemblant à un impromptu. Dans le poème en asclépiades mineurs où il s'excuse de ne pas pouvoir accomplir la tâche requise, Sidoine appelle *epigramma* ce genre de composition (*epist.* ix. 13. 2. 14-19) :

istud, da veniam, fingere vatibus  
priscis difficile est, difficile et mihi,  
ut diversa sonans os *epigrammata*  
nil crebras titubet propter epistulas,  
quas cantu ac modulis luxuriantibus  
lascivire vetat mascula dictio.

<sup>24</sup> Seule exception admise, la louange poétique des martyrs, en premier lieu celle de saint Saturnin : vv. 61-76.

<sup>25</sup> *Epist.* ix. 13. 2 *Horatiana incude formatos Asclepiadeos tibi quospiam, quibus inter bibendum pronuntiandis exerceare*. Sur ce poème cf. Consolino 2011.

De toute évidence *epigrammata* a ici la même signification que chez Pline le Jeune,<sup>26</sup> avec *diversa* se référant à la variété des mètres employés. D'ailleurs l'asclépiade est un mètre étranger à la tradition grecque et latine de l'épigramme *stricto sensu*,<sup>27</sup> et les asclépiades mineurs *katà stichon*, que Sidoine choisit pour sa *recusatio* sont le mètre avec lequel Horace ouvre et termine le recueil des trois premiers livres de ses odes.

Sidoine appelle encore *epigramma* dans *epist.* ix. 13 un poème de 120 dimètres anacréontiques récité à peu près 20 ans auparavant et qui fait l'éloge d'un livre écrit par Pétrus, le puissant *magister epistularum* de l'empereur Majorien. La composition avait eu lieu pendant un dîner auquel participaient d'autres poètes aussi : on leur avait mis sous les yeux le livre, sur lequel ils avaient improvisé des poèmes, en attendant que le repas fût servi. Pour ne pas mettre dans l'embarras les invités engagés dans la compétition poétique, on avait décidé que chacun d'eux composerait dans un mètre différent (*epist.* ix. 13. 5) :

Placuit namque pro caritate collegii, licet omnibus eadem scribendi materia existeret, non uno tamen *epigrammata* singulorum genere proferri, ne quispiam nostrum, qui ceteris dixisset exilius, verecundia primum, post morderetur invidia.

Ici *epigrammata* indique des poèmes *impromptus* à longueur contenue (le temps pour la composition et la récitation est limité, ce qui pourtant n'empêche pas Sidoine de composer un poème de 120 vers), à mètre variable et qui ne se veulent pas solennels : en parlant de ses propres vers, Sidoine les définit comme *nugae* et *ludicra*.<sup>28</sup>

En conclusion, dans les occurrences de cette acception plus large et indéterminée, *epigramma* est un synonyme de 'pièce en vers' sans prétention de qualité. Les textes ainsi qualifiés

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Mondin 2008, p. 470.

<sup>27</sup> La latinité tardive semble connaître deux exceptions seulement : *AL* 131 R<sup>2</sup> = 120 SB et *AL* 629 R<sup>2</sup> (= *Sap.* 135 Friedrich), dans ce dernier cas le choix du mètre a été peut être suggéré par le nom de l'auteur, qui s'appellerait Asclépiadius : cf. Friedrich 2002, p. 425.

<sup>28</sup> *Epist.* ix. 13. 6 *Tales enim nugas [...] post annos circiter viginti profero in lucem [...]. Proinde peto, ut praesentibus ludicris libenter ignoscas.*



que Sidoine rapporte sont en fait des compositions poétiques légères, d'occasion et/ou impromptues ; excepté l'hendécasyllabe phalécien, leurs mètres sont étrangers à l'épigramme canonisée, leur extension est contenue, mais bien supérieure à celle que l'on relève dans les *corpora* les plus importants et étendus – d'Ausone jusqu'aux poètes de l'Afrique vandale – et qui, pour les *epigrammata longa*, oscille entre 14 et 26 vers.<sup>29</sup> Dans cette catégorie pourrait aussi s'inscrire le *carm.* 13, une prière à l'empereur Majorien pour qu'il lui enlève un impôt : ce petit poème – 20 distiques suivis par 20 hendécasyllabes phalécien *de eodem* – qui dans les manuscrits a le titre d'*epigramma*, est une composition polymétrique à la manière d'Ausone.<sup>30</sup>

Il y a enfin une occurrence d'*epigramma* pour laquelle il est difficile d'avoir une certitude sur le sens du mot. En écrivant à son ami Desideratus, Sidoine lui annonce le décès de la matrone Philomathia, pour qui il a composé une épitaphe en hendécasyllabes phalécien qu'il lui envoie en l'introduisant par ces mots (*epist.* II. 8. 2) :

neniam funebrem non per elegos sed per endecasyllabos  
marmoris incisam planctu prope calente dictavi. Quam si  
non satis improbas, *ceteris epigrammatum meorum voluminibus*  
applicandam mercennarius bybliopola suscipiet ; si quid secus,  
sufficit saxo carmen saxeum contineri.

A quoi se réfère Sidoine lorsqu'il parle de *cetera epigrammatum volumina* ? Même si l'expression était une hypallage équivalant à *ceterorum epigrammatum meorum voluminibus*,<sup>31</sup> le pluriel *volumina* laisse penser à une production poétique qui, par son ampleur, devait occuper plus qu'un rouleau. Comme le *bibliopola*, à qui revenait le soin d'apprêter le volume,<sup>32</sup> pouvait encore y ajouter le texte de l'épitaphe, le rouleau qui aurait

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Mondin 2008, pp. 426–434.

<sup>30</sup> Je considère comme une pièce unique le *carm.* 13 parce que, tandis que les distiques ont l'allure d'une épigramme autonome, les hendécasyllabes phalécien reçoivent leur signification des 20 vers qui les précèdent.

<sup>31</sup> C'est l'interprétation proposée par Anderson 1980, p. LXVI s., n. 2 'Ceteris is loosely used: he means: "the existing books (or perhaps 'rolls') of my epigrams"', suivi par Mondin 2008, p. 472.

<sup>32</sup> Sur le rôle du *bibliopola* dans l'antiquité tardive, cf. Santelia 2000.

dû le contenir ne devait pas être complet en 472, date de la lettre qui en parle.<sup>33</sup> L'inscription pour Philomathia nous a été transmise seulement par la lettre de Sidoine, ce qui fait supposer la perte du rouleau – complet ou incomplet – sur lequel elle avait été transcrite,<sup>34</sup> et qui aurait pu contenir un recueil ou de *Buch-* et *Steinepigramme* (*epigrammata* au sens technique), ou bien de compositions poétiques légères de mètre et d'extension variables (*epigrammata* au sens général du mot). Il n'est donc pas prudent d'identifier tout court les *epigrammatum volumina* avec les *carmina minora*,<sup>35</sup> d'autant plus que pour ces derniers il n'y a aucune attestation du titre d'*epigrammata* ni dans la tradition manuscrite ni ailleurs, et, dans le poème qui ouvre le recueil, le poète ne parle pas d'*epigrammata*, mais de *nugae* (*carm.* 9. 9-10 *nugas [...] / sparsit quas tenerae iocus iuventae*), terme qui depuis Catulle indique une poésie légère, mais par lequel dans une lettre Sidoine, non sans coquetterie, définit tant ses compositions en vers que celles en prose.<sup>36</sup>

Dans l'hypothèse – non démontrable ni démontrée – que l'expression *epigrammata* était le titre donné par Sidoine au seul recueil de ses *carmina minora*, ou à un recueil dont ils faisaient

<sup>33</sup> Indépendamment du nombre des étapes – trois pour Loyen 1960 et deux pour Schetter 1992 (et peut-être une seule pour Mondin 2008, p. 474 n. 94) – dans lesquelles les *carmina minora* ont été publiés, ce processus était accompli, lorsque Sidoine mentionne les *epigrammatum volumina*. Sur les hypothèses relatives à l'époque de la publication des *carmina minora*, je renvoie à Hernandez Lobato 2006 (repris avec des variations minimales dans Hernandez Lobato 2012, pp. 57-72), avec qui je suis du même avis sur la composition tardive du *carm.* 16 et sur la présence du *carm.* 24 dans la première édition.

<sup>34</sup> Ce que Sidoine dit de sa production poétique dans *epist.* ix. 16. 3, vv. 33-36 témoigne qu'elle ne devait pas se limiter au corpus qui nous est parvenu : cf. Stevens 1933, pp. 108-109, Bernt 1968, p. 89 et Gualandri 1993, p. 215 ; voir aussi Santelia 2000, pp. 5-6, n. 27.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. en particulier Klotz 1923, col. 2234, 12 s. : 'als epigrammata (d.h. kleine Gedichte, *nugae*) bezeichnet sie der Dichter selbst'; Loyen 1970, T. I, p. 62, n. 32 : 'Epigrammatum désigne, à n'en pas douter, le recueil des petits poèmes (*carm.* IX-XXIV)' et Schetter 1992, p. 351 ('in den Exemplaren seiner *epigrammata*, vermutlich der "carmina minora"'); voir aussi n. 29 : 'es liegt nahe, unter *epigrammata* "Sidonius' *carmina minora*" zu verstehen', pour lequel d'ailleurs auch kann *epigramma* [...] umfangreichere Gedichte bezeichnen'. Mascoli 2003, p. 163 admet cette possibilité ('i volumina qui ricordati potrebbero essere quelli contenenti le cosiddette *nugae*, i carmi 9-24').

<sup>36</sup> Cf. *epist.* iii. 14. 1 *meas nugas sive confectas opere prosario seu poetarum stilo cantilenosas*.

partie, l'auteur aurait ainsi nommé un ensemble largement différencié à son intérieur, du moins pour ce qui est des poèmes qui nous sont parvenus, et qui appartiennent aux genres littéraires les plus divers.<sup>37</sup> Il y a peu de doutes que, se référant à une semblable collection de poèmes, *epigrammata* reste une définition autant modeste que vague, qui ne pourrait identifier un genre littéraire donné (pas plus que *nugae* ou *poematia*), et qui indiquerait seulement le caractère et la valeur de la collection : des bagatelles sans aucune prétention d'atteindre les hauteurs de la grande poésie.

Laissant de côté cette dernière occurrence, pour laquelle nous ne connaissons pas le référent du mot, l'analyse des autres attestations d'*epigramma* conduite jusqu'ici nous a donc montré que chez Sidoine ce terme a trois référents possibles, qui prouvent comment son usage admet soit une interprétation restrictive du terme, soit une interprétation plus lâche, qui indique tout simplement des compositions poétiques sans importance, qui ne respectent pas l'*oligostichia* prêchée par l'auteur lui-même dans ses louanges à Lampridius, et qui dépassent largement les dimensions des *epigrammata longa*. Sidoine d'ailleurs à leur propos ne fait aucune allusion aux règles de l'épigramme canonique. Il le fait au contraire pour le *carm.* 22, dans un passage dont l'interprétation exige une analyse à part.

#### 4. Epigramma et Silvae dans le *carm.* 22. 6

Pendant un séjour à Narbonne, Sidoine eut l'idée de composer *quospiam hexametros* pour en faire cadeau à un de ses amis, le sénateur gallo-romain Pontius Leontius.<sup>38</sup> Les 'quelques hexamètres' dont il parle sont en réalité un poème de 235 vers, le *carm.* 22, sur un sujet qui plaira sans doute au dédicataire, même si les vers devaient lui déplaire : le château (*Burgus*) de Pontius, dont est retracée l'étiologie mythique.

Sidoine ouvre son poème par une malédiction plaisante proferée contre le voyageur qui a pu voir *Burgus* sans en chanter les louanges : qu'il puisse rencontrer le Cyclope et d'autres

<sup>37</sup> Voir *infra*, p. 88.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. *carm.* 22. 1. Le poème est au § 4.

personnages du mythe fameux pour leur cruauté envers les hôtes (vv. 1-11). Après une invocation à Erato (vv. 12-21), le récit des antécédents mythiques commence avec la description de Bacchus s'avançant sur son char et du cortège qui en célèbre le triomphe sur Erythres (vv. 22-63). Le dieu se dirige en vol vers Thèbes lorsqu'il voit Apollon venant de la citadelle d'Aonie sur son attelage de griffons et suivi par son propre cortège (vv. 64-82 : ici la description est plus brève). Les deux cortèges se réunissent, les deux frères se lèvent pour s'embrasser et Apollon convainc Bacchus de ne pas se rendre à Thèbes, patrie des impies Niobé et Agave, où maintenant va s'accomplir le mariage incestueux entre un fils parricide et sa mère. Si Dionysos veut se joindre à lui, Apollon lui dira dans quelle terre ils pourront établir leur commun séjour (vv. 83-100). Il lui fait une description de l'endroit où Garonne et Dordogne confondent leurs eaux (vv. 101-113), des murailles et des thermes qu'un jour y bâtit le fondateur de la maison, Pontius Paulinus (vv. 114-141), et il analyse minutieusement toutes les autres constructions de la future Burgus (vv. 142-220). Apollon termine son discours en renouvelant son invitation : il va laisser la résidence à son frère, en prenant pour lui-même seulement la fontaine qui coule de la montagne et qui sera sa nouvelle Castalie (vv. 220-230). Silène, qui est désormais presque dégrisé, approuve, et les deux chœurs ensemble applaudissent et invitent les lieux consacrés à Bromius et à Phébus à ne plus requérir la présence de leur dieu. Que Burgus devienne dorénavant la demeure préférée des deux divinités et leur plaise éternellement (vv. 231-235).

L'articulation du poème et la large place qu'il fait à l'*ekphrasis* rappellent les *Silves* de Stace (en particulier celles dédiées à la description des bains de Claudius Etruscus et de la villa de Manilius Vopiscus à Tivoli), et c'est précisément à Stace que Sidoine renvoie dans le morceau en prose qui clôt la pièce (*carm.* 22. 6) :

Si quis autem carmen prolixius eatenus duxerit esse culpandum, quod epigrammatis excesserit paucitatem, istum liquido patet neque balneas Etrusci neque Herculem Surrentinum neque comas Flavii Earini neque Tibur Vopisci neque omnino quicquam de Papinii nostri silvulis lectitasse ; quas

omnes descriptiones vir ille praeiudicatissimus non distichorum aut tetrastichorum stringit angustiis, sed potius, ut lyricus Flaccus in artis poeticae volumine praecipit, multis isdemque purpureis locorum communium pannis semel inchoatas materias decenter extendit.

Le sens général du passage est clair : pour se défendre des accusations d'avoir dépassé la brièveté propre à l'épigramme,<sup>39</sup> le poète se réclame de l'autorité de Stace qui, dans ses *Silves*, aurait suivi le conseil d'Horace en développant son sujet à l'aide de lieux communs (en réalité dans les vv. 14-16 de l'*Ars poetica*, évoqués par Sidoine, Horace blâme ceux qui gâtent la grave dignité de leurs vers en les amplifiant par le recours à des lieux communs,<sup>40</sup> mais notre auteur suit l'interprétation qu'en donne le Ps. Acron).<sup>41</sup> Mais si l'on entre dans les détails, il reste néanmoins des questions ouvertes. En premier lieu, pourquoi Sidoine a-t-il rappelé la brièveté de l'épigramme (*quod epigrammatis excesserit paucitatem*) à propos d'un poème de 235 vers ? En second lieu, comment entendre la connexion qu'il établit entre épigramme et *Silves* ?

Dans sa contribution de 2008, Luca Mondin a formulé une réponse intéressante et ingénieuse, qui n'est pas sans rapport avec l'*epigramma longum* de Martial : la défense que celui-ci fait des *epigrammata longa* inspirerait à Sidoine une 'réflexion métalittéraire' qui lui permettrait de justifier ses choix en ayant recours au modèle formel de Stace interprété à travers l'autorité des indications théoriques de l'*Ars poetica* 15-16,<sup>42</sup> ou, pour mieux dire, du Ps. Acron, selon lequel par ces mots le poète mettrait en garde contre les amplifications inopportunes, mais recomman-

<sup>39</sup> Delhey 1993, p. 207 : 'Der Teminus *epigramma* bezeichnet hier ein "kurzes Gedicht", wie z.B. epist. 8, 11, 7 [...]. Gedacht ist also an Kurzgedichte aus einem (z. B. carn. 19-21) oder zwei Distichen, möglicherweise auch zwei oder vier Hexametern'.

<sup>40</sup> Hor. *Ars* 14-16 *Inceptis gravibus plerumque et magna professis / purpureus, late qui splendeat, unus et alter / assuitur pannus*.

<sup>41</sup> Le mérite d'avoir montré qu'il ne s'agit pas d'une bévue de Sidoine, mais de l'interprétation du Ps. Acron, revient à Quadlbauer 1980, pp. 1-11.

<sup>42</sup> Mondin 2008, p. 475 : 'Se è Marziale, con la sua reiterata difesa degli *epigrammata longa*, a fornire l'idea per questa riflessione metaletteraria, Sidonio argomenta la propria scelta compositiva ponendola sotto la duplice cauzione del modello formale di Stazio interpretato attraverso l'*auctoritas* teorica di Orazio'.

derait celles qui ne mettent pas en péril l'unité du contexte. Plus précisément Sidoine appliquerait ces indications aux *libelli quasi epigrammatis modo scripti* de Stace, et l'étendrait d'abord à quatre silves choisies pour leur affinité avec son poème, et ensuite à toutes les *Silves*, parce qu'elles ont la large envergure conseillée par Horace. Même si Sidoine n'y renvoie pas, un lecteur docte n'aurait d'ailleurs eu aucune difficulté à décrypter dans les mots de Sidoine une allusion au conseil sur la composition d'un bon poème qu'Horace donne un peu plus loin, au v. 23 : *denique sit quodvis, simplex dumtaxat et unum*. Même si d'une façon implicite, à travers cette allusion notre poète opposerait ainsi à ses détracteurs le même principe proclamé par Martial II. 77. 7 en défense de ses *epigrammata longa* : *non sunt longa quibus nihil est quod demere possis*.<sup>43</sup>

En conclusion, Sidoine partagerait avec le poète de Bilbilis l'aversion pour la *paucitas* comme critère absolu du texte épigrammatique, mais il trouverait préférables à la sèche concision de Martial le décor et l'ampleur des *Silves* qui traitent les mêmes sujets.<sup>44</sup> Notre poème se placerait donc dans le sillage de l'*epigramma longum*, et la mention des *Silves* servirait à Sidoine pour proposer un élargissement des confins du genre. Cette conclusion une fois acceptée, il en découle une extension de la catégorie de l'épigramme qui, dans l'œuvre de notre auteur, aurait ses deux extrêmes dans les *Tetrasticha* d'une part et l'*Eucharisticon* (c'est-à-dire le *carm.* 16, action de grâces à l'évêque Faustus de Riez), de l'autre. Le titre d'*epigrammaton libri* embrasserait ainsi tous les *carmina minora*, et pourrait même inclure les panégyriques.<sup>45</sup>

Ce qui, à mon avis, ne convainc pas dans la reconstruction proposée par Mondin est la connexion établie entre l'*Ars* et la défense de l'*epigramma longum*. Interprétés à la manière du Ps. Acron, qui les applique à la poésie *grandis*,<sup>46</sup> les préceptes

<sup>43</sup> Mondin 2008, pp. 475–477. Sur les *libelli quasi epigrammatis modo scripti* cf. *infra*, p. 89.

<sup>44</sup> Mondin 2008, p. 478.

<sup>45</sup> Mondin 2008, pp. 482–487. Les conclusions de Mondin sont validées, immédiatement après, par Condorelli 2008, p. 157, pour qui le *carm.* 22 représenterait 'una "dilatazione" estrema del concetto del genere epigrammatico'.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Ps. Acron sur *Ars* 14, ed. Keller II, p. 311 ll. 7–13 : *qui [...] incipit granditer [...] Qui conantur aliquid magnum scribere [...] qui incipiant describere grandia [...] in magno poemate*.

de l'*Ars* sur les exordes solennels (*incepta gravia*) peuvent justifier l'élégance, la solennité et l'extension des *Silves* (et indirectement du poème de Sidoine qui les imite), mais ils n'ont rien à voir avec la *paucitas* de l'épigramme d'après Martial. L'existence d'une allusion cachée à l'*Ars* 23 ne peut pas être démontrée, et *denique sit quodvis, simplex dumtaxat et unum* d'Horace, qui prescrit la cohérence à l'intérieur du poème, est une énonciation dont le sens ne coïncide pas avec celui de *non sunt longa quibus nihil est quod demere possis* de Martial, qui définit la *brevitas* comme absence du superflu.

Faute de connections théoriques évidentes entre notre poème et l'épigramme en tant que forme littéraire canonisée par Martial, il faudra alors s'interroger sur l'existence de traits communs entre les deux. On peut tout d'abord remarquer que, avec ses 235 vers, le *carm.* 22 serait trop long même en tant qu'*epigramma longum* : la plus longue des épigrammes de Martial, III. 58, dédiée elle aussi à la description flatteuse d'une riche demeure, la villa de Faustinus à Baïa, compte 51 vers. Mais il y a plus. Tout en laissant de côté son extension, ce qui nous empêche définitivement de classer notre poème parmi les *epigrammata longa*, c'est la définition même d'*epigramma longum*, telle qu'elle est née pour l'épigramme dans la forme définie et pratiquée par Martial. A l'intérieur de ses livres, une épigramme est longue par rapport à la longueur de la quasi-totalité des autres.<sup>47</sup>

En outre, Martial a toujours soin de signaler l'appartenance de ses *epigrammata longa* au genre des épigrammes et la position occupée par chacun d'eux souligne l'exceptionnalité de son extension.<sup>48</sup> Pour qu'on puisse parler d'*epigramma longum* il faut être en présence d'un recueil d'épigrammes qui ne soient pas

<sup>47</sup> Dans les douze livres des épigrammes de Martial, 62 seulement ont plus de 16 vers (Scherf 2008, p. 200), et 31 ont une longueur égale ou supérieure à 22 vers (Canobbio 2008, p. 192 s.). Le maximum de la longueur est représenté par les 51 choliambes de III. 58, suivis par les 42 vers en distiques jambiques de I. 49 et par les 36 hendécasyllabes phalécien de IV. 64. Il peut être intéressant de constater que pour les deux recueils, antérieurs à Sidoine, d'Ausone (famille Z) et des *Epigrammata Bobiensia*, la longueur moyenne est de 5,2 vers et que les épigrammes les plus longues sont respectivement de 20 et 26 vers (cf. Mondin 2008, p. 427).

<sup>48</sup> Voir en particulier Merli 1993b, p. 232 ; Canobbio 2008, p. 174 ; Scherf 2008, pp. 205-208 ; Fabbrini 2008.

trop éloignées des caractéristiques extérieures fixées par Martial et dont on puisse définir la longueur moyenne. Ce n'est pas le cas du *carm.* 22, qui avec toute vraisemblance eut d'abord une circulation autonome. Même s'il fut ajouté après coup au corpus des *carmina minora*<sup>49</sup> et si le passage de Sidoine que nous sommes en train de discuter remontait à cette deuxième phase, le contexte où notre pièce a été insérée est un recueil de quinze autres poèmes dont seulement cinq (les *carm.* 17-21) sont des épigrammes canoniques, auxquelles on pourrait ajouter la plaisante *recusatio* au sénateur Catullinus.<sup>50</sup> Pour le reste, nous avons affaire à une collection hétérogène : on y trouve la dédicace du recueil à Félix (le *carm.* 9, en 346 hendécasyllabes phalécien) et le *propempticon ad libellum* (le *carm.* 24 en 101 hendécasyllabes phalécien), deux épithalames (les *carm.* 11 et 15) avec leurs préfaces (les *carm.* 10 et 14) ; un poème en 40 vers et deux mètres,<sup>51</sup> le *carm.* 16, solennelle action de grâces à l'évêque Faustus de Riez, et finalement le *carm.* 23, longue épître de louanges (512 hendécasyllabes phalécien) à Consentius.

Les choses ne changent pas si l'on considère le niveau stylistique (trop haut pour une épigramme) et la technique de la composition. Tandis que Martial construit ses *epigrammata longa* à l'aide de catalogues qu'il insère entre les tout premiers vers et la conclusion rapide,<sup>52</sup> rien de semblable ne se passe dans le *carm.* 22, un poème étiologique à caractère narratif, au sujet mythique et au ton épique souligné par l'usage du vers héroïque. En conclusion, ce qui ne permet pas de considérer l'extension inusitée du *carm.* 22 comme un écart au modèle canonisé par Martial est l'absence totale de traits qui dénoncent l'adhésion à ce modèle.

Comme il est bien difficile de soutenir que le *carm.* 22 est un *epigramma longum* de longueur exceptionnelle, il faut avancer une interprétation différente. Nous avons vu que pour notre

<sup>49</sup> On l'a déduit de l'ordre dans lequel les *carmina minora* nous ont été transmis : cf. Loyen 1960, pp. xxxi-xxxv.

<sup>50</sup> Le *carm.* 12, dont nous avons parlé *supra*, p. 73.

<sup>51</sup> Le *carm.* 13 : cf. *supra*, p. 81.

<sup>52</sup> La Penna 1992 a attiré l'attention sur le recours de Martial aux catalogues. La fonction du catalogue par rapport à la longueur d'une épigramme a été mise en relief par Merli 1993a, pp. 114-116 à propos de m. 93, et Merli 2008, pp. 319-322.



auteur *epigramma* peut désigner soit l'épigramme canonisée et astreinte à la loi de la *brevitas*, soit un petit poème sans prétention et pour lequel la *brevitas* n'est pas de rigueur. Or, si Sidoine parle de l'*epigrammatis paucitas*, s'il se défend de l'accusation de ne pas l'avoir appliquée, il est évident que c'est à l'acception spécialisée du terme, et donc à l'épigramme canonique qu'il se réfère, pour lui opposer une manière différente de traiter les mêmes thèmes : le poème a excédé la brièveté de l'épigramme dans le sens que Sidoine, ne voulant pas contraindre son sujet dans le nombre étroit de vers typique de celle-ci, a préféré le développer à son aise en s'inspirant du modèle représenté par les *Silves*.<sup>53</sup>

La clé de la connexion établie entre la brièveté de l'épigramme et le rappel à l'autorité de Stace a été correctement reconnue dans la préface au Livre II des *Silves*, où Stace présente *silv.* II. 3 et *silv.* II. 4 (respectivement 77 hexamètres sur l'arbre d'Atédus Melior et 37 hexamètres sur son perroquet) comme *leves libellos quasi epigrammatis loco scriptos*.<sup>54</sup> En effet, *silv.* II. 4, en tant qu'épigramme d'un perroquet, se rattache à une tradition grecque et ensuite latine d'épigrammes funéraires sur les animaux, tandis que pour l'arbre de Melior on peut rappeler Mart. IX. 61, 11 distiques sur le platane planté jadis par Jules César à l'intérieur d'une riche maison près de Cordoue.<sup>55</sup> On peut parler aussi de *libellus quasi epigrammatis loco scriptus* pour *silv.* II. 5 sur la mort du lion apprivoisé, pièce à laquelle Stace attribue la même allure légère (*stili facilitas*). C'est encore une fois un sujet que l'on retrouve aussi chez Martial.<sup>56</sup> Bref, il s'agit de trois *silves* qui,

<sup>53</sup> Sur les *Silves* comme un des modèles des *carmina minora* voir à présent Consolino 2013 (pour *carm.* 22, cf. p. 229 s.).

<sup>54</sup> *Silv.* II, *præf.* est déjà signalé comme source de Sidoine dans les *loci similes* de Geisler 1887 ; cf. aussi Delhey 1993, p. 207 *ad loc.* et Mondin 2008, p. 475.

<sup>55</sup> L'Anthologie grecque nous a transmis les épigrammes les plus anciennes (III<sup>e</sup> siècle av. J.-C.) sur la mort d'un animal ; en latin sur le même sujet et plus proches de Stace il y a Catulle, 3 pour le *passer* et Ovide, *am.* II. 6 pour le perroquet de Corinne : cf. Van Dam 1984, p. 336. Dans son commentaire à *silv.* II. 3 (l'arbre de Mélior), pour la composition d'une épigramme comme cadeau d'anniversaire, Van Dam 1984, p. 282 rappelle trois épigrammes grecques de Léonidas de Tarente (AP VI. 321, 325, 329) et Mart. X. 87 ; pour le thème de l'arbre, Mart. IX. 61.

<sup>56</sup> Pour le lion de Stace, Van Dam 1984, p. 368 signale Mart. VIII. 53 sur la mort d'un lion et XI. 69 sur celle d'un chien.

tout en partageant leurs sujets avec les épigrammes, s'en détachent dans la manière de les développer,<sup>57</sup> et adoptent l'hexamètre, presque absent chez Martial.<sup>58</sup> Par l'expression *quasi epigrammatis loco scriptos*, 'écrits pour ainsi dire à la place d'une épigramme', Stace souligne cette différence et déclare en même temps la vocation poétique de ses *libelli*, qui – tout en occupant la même place et avec des fonctions largement analogues – se proposent comme une forme plus haute de poésie d'occasion, alternative à celle de l'épigramme.<sup>59</sup>

Venons-en maintenant aux quatre *Silves* mentionnées par Sidoine. i. 5, la première des *Silves* citées, est un poème de 65 hexamètres sur le *balneum* de Claudius Étruscus. Le poète débute en affirmant qu'il ne veut pas invoquer les divinités majeures : il lui suffit d'appeler les Naiades et Vulcain. Il n'y a aucun récit, seulement une riche description qui se déroule en évoquant à chaque pas des images, des situations et des personnages du mythe. Les thermes de Claudius Étruscus ont été aussi chantés par Martial vi. 42, un *epigramma longum* de 24 hendécasyllabes phaléciens. Il en va de même pour *silv.* i. 3, en 110 hexamètres dédiés à la villa tiburtine de Manilius Vopiscus, *locus amoenus* dont jouissent le *dominus* avec ses hôtes et les divinités qui le peuplent. Dans ses épigrammes, Martial ne parle pas de la villa de Vopiscus, mais il compose un *epigramma longum* sur celle de Julius Martialis (iv. 64 en 36 hendécasyllabes phaléciens, dont le premier vers coïncide avec le dernier), une épigramme – viii. 36 en six élégiaques – sur le palais de Domitien au Palatin, et il y a aussi les 29 choliambes de x. 30, qui exaltent la très belle demeure d'Apollinaire à Formia.

<sup>57</sup> Seulement à ce propos on peut parler avec Newlands 2011, p. 61 d'une influence de l'épigramme sur ces pièces ; pour le reste, Van Dam 1984, p. 282 a raison d'affirmer qu'aucune d'elles ne ressemble de près à une épigramme, parce qu'elles manquent de brièveté, de simplicité et de réalisme. L'identité avec l'épigramme est d'ailleurs exclue par *quasi*.

<sup>58</sup> Dans tout le corpus de Martial, sur un total de 1560 épigrammes il y a seulement quatre pièces en hexamètres (les *monosticha* ii. 73 et vii. 98 ; i. 53 en 12 vers et vi. 64 en 32 vers), qui représentent 46 vers sur 9592 : Scherf 2001, p. 114 s.

<sup>59</sup> Les préfaces montrent que Stace cherche pour les *Silves* un *Sitz im Leben* à côté des épigrammes et en concurrence avec celles-ci : voir Rosati 2015, que je remercie pour m'avoir permis de lire sa contribution avant qu'elle soit publiée.

Il reste encore deux *silves* citées par Sidoine et celles-ci ont un caractère étiologique comme notre *carmin*. 22. Les 186 hexamètres de *silv.* III. 1 sur le temple d'Hercule dans la villa de Pollius Félix à Sorrente racontent les événements qui ont porté à la construction du temple, demandée à Pollius par le dieu en personne, qui a participé aux travaux pour le bâtir et a solennellement juré sur le Styx de renoncer à ses lieux de culte pour s'y établir. *Silv.* III. 4 a pour objet la consécration à Asclépios et l'envoi à Pergame de la chevelure du jeune eunuque Flavius Earinus, particulièrement cher à l'empereur. En 106 hexamètres, Stace explique comment Vénus avait vu l'enfant jouer près du temple d'Asclépios devant l'autel du dieu et, frappée par sa beauté, l'avait conduit à la cour de Domitien. Sur le même sujet, nous avons trois épigrammes de Martial : IX. 16 en trois élégiaques et IX. 17 en quatre élégiaques sur l'envoi de la chevelure, et IX. 36 en six distiques élégiaques, où Martial met en scène un colloque entre Jupiter et Ganymède qui, en vain, lui demande la permission d'imiter Flavius en coupant lui aussi ses cheveux. Les *Silves* citées par Sidoine partagent donc leurs sujets avec des épigrammes de Martial, qui ne coïncident jamais avec une épigramme standard : dans un cas la matière est distribuée en trois textes, tandis que trois fois (VI. 42, IV. 64 et X. 30) sur quatre nous avons des *epigrammata longa*, que Sidoine aurait bien pu mentionner comme des précédents pour son propre poème.<sup>60</sup> S'il ne le fait pas, s'il préfère ne pas se rallier à Martial, mais à Stace, c'est évidemment parce qu'il veut communiquer à son lecteur qu'il n'a pas composé un *epigramma longum* à la manière de Martial, mais une *silve* sur le modèle de Stace.

Les quatre *Silves* mentionnées par Sidoine et les trois *quasi epigrammatis loco scriptae* (aux deux premières il faut ajouter celle du lion mort dans l'arène) traitent des thèmes propres aux épigrammes canonisées, mais si elles se distinguent de Martial (qui écrit des *epigrammata longa* plus longs que ceux de ses successeurs et qui en compose aussi sur les villas de ses amis), ce

<sup>60</sup> Sur ces trois *epigrammata longa*, et leur possibles rapports avec les *silves*, on renvoie à l'analyse exhaustive de Fabbrini 2007.

n'est pas seulement ou surtout par leur extension : Stace, qui emploie un langage plus soutenu, préfère la description, Martial le catalogue ; Stace aime le récit étiologique et mythologique, où les divinités agissent, Martial aime le réalisme et peint des situations et des paysages bien plus proches du monde des hommes que de celui des dieux.

Il n'y a donc aucune raison ni de voir dans *carm.* 22. 6 une connexion avec la défense des *epigrammata longa* faite par Martial, ni de considérer ce poème comme un *epigramma longum* (si long en fait qu'il permettrait à notre auteur d'étendre le domaine de l'épigramme canonisée jusqu'aux *silves*, et même au delà). Plutôt, Sidoine a joué sur la plurivocité du mot *epigramma* pour opposer la relative longueur des *Silves*, poésie impromptue et d'occasion, qui se prétend légère (et donc une variété de poésie épigrammatique au sens large du mot), à l'épigramme en tant que genre codifié qui a, dans la brièveté, un de ses traits identitaires : pour dignement exalter le Burgus de son ami, Sidoine, au lieu de composer une épigramme à la manière de Martial (c'est ainsi que s'explique la mention de la *paucitas*), a décidé d'écrire une *Silve* à la manière de Stace qui, dans quelques *Silves*, avait développé d'une manière plus riche et articulée des thèmes qui avaient aussi reçu (dans la plupart des cas par Martial) un traitement épigrammatique au sens strict du mot.<sup>61</sup>

Plus qu'une évolution du genre '*epigramma*' par le biais de l'*epigramma longum*, l'œuvre de Sidoine nous témoigne comment le terme *epigramma* est une sorte de dénominateur commun pour plusieurs référents, quelques-uns plus spécifiques et plus strictement déterminés que les autres. Dans ce régime de coexistence, d'un côté *epigramma* – chez Sidoine et ailleurs<sup>62</sup> – est un 'nom commun de poème léger', de l'autre, le mot continue d'avoir une acception spécialisée qui se réfère à la forme littéraire brève canonisée par Martial.

<sup>61</sup> Aux correspondances thématiques entre les *Silves* de Stace dont nous avons parlé et les épigrammes, ou les cycles d'épigrammes de Martial, on peut ajouter *silv.* II. 1 = Mart. VI. 28–29 pour la mort de Glaucias et *silv.* II. 7 = Mart. VII. 21–23 à Polla Argentaria pour l'anniversaire de Lucain.

<sup>62</sup> Sur ce point, voir Mondin 2008, pp. 406–408.

Quelques dizaines d'années après, la coprésence de deux référents d'*epigramma* – l'un lié à la qualité d'un poème et l'autre à sa brièveté – est attestée, toujours en Gaule, chez un neveu de Sidoine, l'évêque Avite de Vienne :<sup>63</sup>

Cogis insuper tibi specialius dari versus illos, quos ad venerabilem Fuscina sororem nostram de consolatoria castitatis laude conscripsi. Quos tamen cum ego [...] *epigramma* rectius dicerem, tu primum libri nomine vocitasti, hoc scilicet vocabulum prolixitati eius adserens convenire.

Avit aurait voulu appeler *epigramma* son poème d'exhortation à la virginité (appliqué à un protreptique de 666 vers, le choix de ce titre équivaut à une déclaration de modestie<sup>64</sup>), mais son frère Apollinaire – qui avait évidemment conscience du concept de composition brève véhiculé par le mot *epigramma* – a trouvé le titre impropre pour un si long poème.<sup>65</sup> Plus loin dans le même prologue, Avit exprime son intention de renoncer à toute forme d'activité poétique, à moins que les circonstances ne le forcent à quelque composition improvisée ; mais alors elle sera d'une brièveté si grande qu'Apollinaire même ne pourra l'appeler autrement qu'*épigramme* (*prol.* 23-28) :

Sane a faciendis versibus pedibusque iungendis pedem de cetero relaturus, nisi forte evidentis causae ratio extorserit alicuius epigrammatis necessitatem : cuius tamen tantam exiguitatem fore polliceor, ut ei aliud nomen adsumere nec ipse praesumas.

<sup>63</sup> C'est le prologue de l'*éloge consolatoire de la chasteté*, p. 112, ll. 6-11 ed. Hecquet-Noti 2011. Dans le prologue du *De spiritalis historiae gestis* Avit définit par le terme *epigramma* des compositions perdues, pour contenir lesquelles il aurait fallu un volume d'une certaine ampleur (*non minimo volumine stringi potuerit epigrammatum multitudo* : p. 202, ll. 10-11 ed. Hecquet-Noti 2011), mais la perte de ces poèmes nous empêche cependant de vérifier l'acception d'*epigramma* dans ce passage-là ; pour Bernt 1968, p. 97, il s'agissait de poèmes, ou même d'inscriptions, mais non à la manière de Martial ; pour Shanzer – Wood 2002, p. 259 'The *epigrammata* are most probably lost shorter poems'.

<sup>64</sup> De 'Bescheidenheitstopos' parlait déjà Bernt 1968, pp. 96-97 ; même explication chez Hecquet-Noti 2011, p. 59, pour laquelle le choix du terme *epigramma* correspond à 'la topique exordiale de l'*humilitas poetarum*'.

<sup>65</sup> Dans ce cas, 'pour Avit, comme pour Sidoine, c'est avant tout la longueur du poème qui détermine son appellation, et non la nature de la poésie' : Hecquet-Noti 2011, p. 60.

Cette fois, tout en se souvenant du ‘testament spirituel’ de son oncle,<sup>66</sup> Avit donne à *epigramma* une acception restrictive, en insistant sur l'*exiguitas* de ses futurs, éventuels poèmes d’occasion\*.

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<sup>66</sup> *Epist* ix. 16. 3, vv. 57–60 (cf. *supra*, p. 79) ; voir Mondin 2008, p. 489.

\* La première version de ce texte remonte à la fin de 2009, lorsque j’ai participé à la journée du 27-11-2009, sur le thème de *Sidoine Apollinaire et la culture de son temps*, organisée à l’Université Blaise-Pascal de Clermont-Ferrand II par les collègues Annick Støher-Monjou et Rémy Poignault, que je remercie de m’avoir invitée, en me donnant l’opportunité de présenter et discuter ma relation. Ma gratitude va aussi à Lucio Ceccarelli, Isabella Gualandri, Elena Merli et Vincent Zarini, pour avoir lu ma relation et pour leurs utiles suggestions, et à Paola Francesca Moretti pour avoir accueilli ma contribution dans ce volume. Last but not least, je sais gré à Claude Bisquerra d’avoir relu mon texte en français. Les Actes du colloque de Mulhouse (6-7 octobre 2011) sur la renaissance de l’épigramme dans la latinité tardive ont paru trop tard pour que je puisse en tenir compte : j’espère pouvoir le faire dès que j’en aurai l’occasion.

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### Abstract

The paper examines the uses of the word *epigramma* in Sidonius Apollinaris' poems and letters. The term is found to be employed: (i) with the specialized meaning it has in Martial; (ii) for a metrical inscription; (iii) to define a noncommittal poem of variable length. As this latter meaning is that given to *epigramma* by Pliny the Younger, whom Sidonius admires and imitates, we can argue that Sidonius called *epigrammata* his longer *carmina minora* according to the practice of Pliny, and there is no reason to suppose that he did so because the category of *epigrammata longa*, which originally applied to Martial's longer epigrams, had been extended to embrace increasingly longer poems. As a matter of fact, the very definition of *longa* can apply only in opposition to normal epigrams, which are characterized by *oligostichia*, as in the case of Martial, while Sidonius' collection of *carmina minora* contains poems belonging to

several literary genres. The expression *epigrammatis excesserit paucitatem* of *carm.* 22. 6 does not mean that Sidonius considers this sophisticated poem of 235 hexameters to be a very long epigram; on the contrary, it states that it is not as short as an epigram should be, because the author has written this poem according to the model prompted not by Martial's epigrams but rather by Statius' *Silvae*.

SOME REMARKS ON  
THE *METRA* IN BOETHIUS'  
*DE CONSOLATIONE PHILOSOPHIAE*.  
EXAMPLES OF ANAPESTIC DIMETERS  
AND ELEGIAC COUPLETS

In this paper I will validate what previous scholars have observed regarding the models of Boethius, by showing how reflection on the metrical composition of a text could lead to an in-depth analysis of the intratextuality, allusiveness and intertextuality of these Boethian poems. Special consideration will be given to the relationship between the meter of a text and its content, using by analogy the criterion of sense-correspondence,<sup>1</sup> which is considered fundamental for the analysis of anapestic poems as well as for those in elegiac couplets. I will focus on elegiac couplets (i. m. 1 and v. m. 1) and anapests, both catalectics (ii. m. 5 and iii. m. 5) and acatalectics (i. m. 5; iii. m. 2; iv. m. 6; v. m. 3).

1. *The Use of Anapestic Meter:*  
*Boeth. cons. v. pr. 3. 36 and ii. m. 5*

*De Consolatione Philosophiae* is Boethius' final work, written when the author was in prison. It is a *prosimetrum* consisting of thirty-nine poems and a considerable number of lines (900) containing a large variety of different meters (*e.g.* dactyls, iambs, aeolics, ionics, glyconics, anapests). The meters are used according to a specific pattern of thematic and structural correspondences.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Floris 2012.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Gruber 2006, pp. 14–24 and Magee 2003, pp. 147–152 for a detailed analysis.

To begin with, Boethius chose the elegiac couplet to begin the *De Consolatione* and then used it again only in the first poem of the last book, dedicated to the confutation of the existence of fate and the discussion of the relationship between God's foresight and mankind's freedom. These themes are both the conclusion of and the key to the entire dialogue between the Philosopher and Philosophy concerning the reasons for the unjust death sentence that makes Boethius suffer and die.

Conversely, the anapestic dimeters cover the highest number of lines (205) composed by Boethius. Research on anapestic acatalectic dimeters indicates that Boethius develops a reasoning in the poems with the same meter; the meter thus has the function of connecting the different stages of this reasoning.<sup>3</sup>

I will propose here an example that shows that there is a link among anapestic acatalectic poems, which illustrates the function of the meter as a step to the reasoning. It is the excerpt, v. pr. 3. 36: *quare necesse erit humanum genus, uti paulo ante cantabas, dissaeptum atque disiunctum suo fonte fatiscere*, which introduces v. m. 3. The three poems involved in the connection are v. m. 3, iv. m. 6 and i. m. 5.

In the sentence *uti paulo ante cantabas*, Boethius alludes to iv. m. 6; this poem focuses partly on the same topic as v. m. 3, that is the discussion on the existence of Divine Providence which contrasts with the rule of Fortune, 'and Boethius states the problem at v, 3, going so far as to quote from Philosophia's poem (36)'.<sup>4</sup> One theme of iv. m. 6 is the conflict between the world's well-balanced order and the disorder of human life. The same theme appears in i. m. 5, with the same meter and the same length as iv. m. 6.<sup>5</sup> In v. m. 3 there is a tentative solution to this conflict: thanks to Plato's recollection, a human being can recover harmony and order. Humans have an interior image of what they are looking for (unity, beauty, truth, etc.) and by recognizing it they restore their unity with God, who has made

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Magee 2003, p. 152. However, this does not imply that a theme discussed in an anapestic poem could not be discussed even in another meter, as it can be seen in Magee 2003, pp. 160–161: for example, i. m. 5 is linked with ii. m. 8.

<sup>4</sup> Magee 2003, p. 166.

<sup>5</sup> Moreschini 2000, p. 296.

all things. Furthermore, these three poems also share the same meter, the acatalectic anapestic dimeter.

At this point, it is interesting to note that the meter gives more evidence to the hypothesis of Seneca's intertext in *ii. m. 5*. The passage discussed is the famous second chorus in Seneca's *Medea* (ll. 301–379). The Boethian poem is composed of anapestic catalectic dimeters and begins with the line *felix nimium prior aetas*. Seneca's poem is also composed of anapestic acatalectic dimeters and begins with the line *audax nimium qui freta primus*. Both first meters, therefore, are composed of an adjective ending in *-x* and the adverb *nimium*, located in the same position, while the second anapestic meter expresses the notion of priority, using synonyms (*primus/prior*). The opening of Boethius refers to that of Seneca,<sup>6</sup> suggesting a link between the two poems. Both poems also share the same content, as they tell the myth of the Golden Age and its violation, and express it with the same images and words (e.g. navigation of sea for the sake of gaining goods: *mare/maris* (Sen. *Med.* 339/Boeth. *ii. m. 5. 13*); *merces/mercibus* (Sen. *Med.* 363/Boeth. *ii. m. 5. 14*).

In Seneca's text the chorus laments over the first day of navigation during which Medea becomes part of the merchandise, *Maiusque mari Medea malum, / merces prima digna carina* (ll. 362–363). The chorus also regrets the Age when the forefathers did not know deceit (ll. 330–331: *Candida nostri saecula patres / videre procul fraude remota*). Finally, the chorus complains about unifications that should never have taken place and foresees a world without borders or distinctions. On the other hand, in Boethius' poem Fortune regrets the past (ll. 23–24: *Utinam modo nostra redirent / in mores tempora priscos!*), believing that the yearning for power and wealth (ll. 25–26: *Sed saevior ignibus Aetnae / fervens amor ardet habendi*) has caused the end of that Age in which everyone was satisfied with their own possessions.

Yet in 1871, Peiper, in the Teubner edition, connected *ii. m. 5* to *Med.* 301–379 in the 'Index locorum quos Boethius Senecae tragoediis transtulit'.<sup>7</sup> However, scholars have different opinions about this proposed debt to Seneca. For example,

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Conte 1974, p. 10, on 'la specializzazione incipitaria della memoria ritmico-compositiva'.

<sup>7</sup> Peiper – Richter 1902, pp. 228–233.

Helga Scheible believes that Peiper's opinion has led to the Boethian poem's depreciation.<sup>8</sup> She thus invites her colleagues not to be satisfied with the consistency of words but rather to analyse the reasons for this consistency.<sup>9</sup>

Twenty years later, Gerard O'Daly offers a detailed analysis of II. m. 5,<sup>10</sup> and, like the aforementioned scholars, he too explores the relationship between Seneca's and Boethius' approach to the theme of violation of the Golden Age. This scholar asserts that 'the force of Boethius' poem does not derive from explicit dependence upon any source or group of sources. He ranges through the entire spectrum of themes associated with the *topos*'<sup>11</sup> and that 'the poem is an extended *exemplum* of the antecedent argument',<sup>12</sup> whose themes were 'the greed, hateful phenomenon associated with wealth'<sup>13</sup> and 'the ever-recurrent perversion of human nature'.<sup>14</sup> For Boethius, following every Latin poet before him and Seneca,<sup>15</sup> 'the Golden Age embodies a timeless truth and ideal [...] of moral regeneration'.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Scheible 1972, p. 2: 'Seine Meinung, dass Boethius nichts weiter als Seneca-Epigone sei, bestimmt noch heute weitgehend das Urteil über die Dichtung der *Consolatio*'.

<sup>9</sup> Scheible 1972, p. 2: 'Das Prinzip, nach dem sie ausgesucht werden, ist lediglich der wörtliche Anklang; das Verständnis des Inhalts bleibt im Hintergrund'.

<sup>10</sup> O'Daly 1991, pp. 178–188.

<sup>11</sup> O'Daly 1991, p. 183.

<sup>12</sup> O'Daly 1991, p. 183.

<sup>13</sup> O'Daly 1991, p. 183.

<sup>14</sup> O'Daly 1991, p. 187.

<sup>15</sup> Virgil has greatly contributed to the development of this *topos*, as shown by the following two quotations: *georg.* II. 458–459 (*o fortunatos nimium, sua si bona norint, / agricolas!*) and *Aen.* IV. 657–658 (*felix, heu nimium felix, si litora tantum / numquam Dardaniae tetigissent nostra carinae*). In the first, Virgil praises rural life, describing it with the typical features of the Age of Saturn. In the following lines this Age is then explicitly named (II. 531–540) and described as the final period before the destruction caused by the civil wars. In the second passage Dido is speaking: before the queen commits suicide, she praises the 'Golden Age' of her life, when she had not yet met Aeneas, who ruined her. The two Virgilian quotations share with Seneca's and Boethius' lines the same series of adjective ending in *-x* (with the exception of *fortunatos*, *georg.* II. 458, which has, however, the same meaning as *felix* in *Aen.* IV. 657 and in *Boeth.* II. m. 5. 1) and the adverb *nimum*. Moreover, all four quotations have the same ictus (*nimiũm*). It is then reasonable to suppose a reference to Virgil from Boethius through Seneca.

<sup>16</sup> O'Daly 1991, p. 188.

Why then Boethius should have alluded in II. m. 5 to *Sen. Med.* 301–379?

In order to answer this question, following Scheible's advice and O'Daly's method, it is fundamental to observe the entire context of the work, where both the references to Seneca's works<sup>17</sup> and to Seneca himself are strikingly numerous.<sup>18</sup>

It is probable that the presence of numerous *topoi*<sup>19</sup> in these texts does not prevent us from investigating whether Boethius has deliberately drawn from previous works, as the use of the same meter in the Boethian poem and in Seneca's chorus would seem to suggest.

It is important to take into account Boethius' personal circumstances and historical context. Boethius, like Seneca, lost the Emperor's favor<sup>20</sup> after he had tried to exert a positive influence over him with his knowledge, especially philosophical. His rather pretentious project, together with Gothic greed, deceived Boethius and led him to misfortune. As a result, Boethius began to wish that the unification between the Goths and Romans had never taken place, originated as it had been purely by a thirst for power.

## 2. *Sense-Correspondence Applied to Elegiac Couplets:* *Boeth. cons. I. m. 1*

It is significant to remember the steps in the studies on the sense – correspondence.

‘In 1899 Gustav Richter showed that the basic principle followed by Seneca in composing the anapaests was one

<sup>17</sup> For a list of them, cf. an *Index nominum* (e.g. Bieler 1957, p. 119).

<sup>18</sup> Despite the remarkable presence of Seneca in Boethius' work, the bibliography about this theme is lacking. The fundamental essay written by Mazzoli 2010 stands as an exception.

<sup>19</sup> Moreschini 1994, p. 152 n. 1: ‘questo carme, di esaltazione della mitica età dell'oro, è formato da una compilazione di *topoi* che si possono incontrare un po' ovunque nelle letterature antiche’.

<sup>20</sup> Magee 2003, p. 154 n. 25 for a comparison of the analogies between Nero and Seneca and that between Theoderic and Boethius (cf. Traina 1991).

of correspondence between metrical units (dimeters and monometers) on the one hand, and units of sense, syntax and style on the other hand'.<sup>21</sup>

He called this criterion *Kongruenzregel* and asserted it in Teubner's edition in 1902,<sup>22</sup> which he himself edited, together with Rudolf Peiper.

In 1987 John Fitch found new criteria which highlight the correspondence between meter and sense: he called them metrical, syntactical and stylistic patterns and changed the original name given by Richter into 'sense-correspondence'.<sup>23</sup> The metrical patterns concern the different ways of combining feet (for example, a dimeter SADS or AAAS), while the syntactical patterns concern the specific ways of combining one clause and one or two lines.<sup>24</sup> Lastly, the stylistic patterns concern the placement of rhetorical figures. For example, in the line quoted in note 24 there is a hyperbaton between the adjective in the second position and the noun in the fourth position.

Otto Zwierlein, author of the principal edition of Seneca's tragedies,<sup>25</sup> states that sense-correspondence occurs also in the elegiac couplets of Ovid<sup>26</sup> – an author well known by Boethius – and in late antique poetry, especially in Boethius and Ausonius.<sup>27</sup> To verify Zwierlein's statement, I will now analyse Boethius' elegiac couplets using sense-correspondence. At this stage, it is necessary to keep in mind the distinctive feature of the elegiac couplet, such as caesuras in the hexameters.

My research focuses on the elegiac couplets in the *De Consolatione*.<sup>28</sup> However, I would like to give an example of an

<sup>21</sup> Fitch 2004, p. 264.

<sup>22</sup> Peiper – Richter 1902.

<sup>23</sup> Fitch 1987.

<sup>24</sup> See e.g. the coincidence between one dimeter and two clauses, coordinate or subordinate, as in Sen. *Thy.* 954 *libet infaustos mittere questus*.

<sup>25</sup> Zwierlein 1986.

<sup>26</sup> Zwierlein 1983–1984, p. 199.





<sup>27</sup> Cf. Zwierlein 1983–1984, p. 195 for Boethius and Zwierlein 1990, p. 696 for Ausonius.

<sup>28</sup> For works using the same method, cf. Flammini 1999; Flammini 2000; Flammini 2003; Orlandi 2008a; Orlandi 2008b.



analysis which combines sense-correspondence and the study of caesuras.

It is Boeth. *cons.* I. m. 1. 11:

9	Venit enim properata malis inopina senectus		DDDDDS
10	et dolor aetatem iussit inesse suam.		DSISSI
11	<b>Intempestivi funduntur vertice cani</b>		SSSSDS
12	et tremit effeto corpore laxa cutis.		DSISDI

The line *intempestivi funduntur vertice cani* is highlighted because it is in a central position in this poem composed of twenty-two lines. The line just quoted contains spondees which make the rhythm slower, except for a dactyl in the fifth position; furthermore, in line 9 the rhythm is the opposite to that of the immediately previous hexameter. Line 11 exemplifies the meaning of line 9 with a concrete image: premature white hair. Finally, the line is rich in rhetorical figures: it is wholly structured as a hyperbaton where the subject *cani*, and its adjective *intempestivi*, are at opposite extremes of the line; conversely, the verb and complement are placed in the middle. Thus the metrical and rhetorical analysis offers new ways of investigating the meaning of the poem.

Moreover, a reference to Virgil could well be highlighted by Boethius, who would make his hexameters in the same way as those of his inspirational model. With regard to caesuras, we note that in this first poem, five out of the twenty-two lines (ll. 1, 7, 15, 19, 21) have the first foot coinciding with a single word. Most certainly, this is a small group of lines but it is significant that this repetition occurs in 159 lines, which constitute 19% of Virgil's *Bucolics*.<sup>29</sup> From the first line Boethius alludes numerous times to Virgil:

1	<u>Carmī</u> na qui quondam studio florente peregi,		DSDSDS
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<sup>29</sup> Cupaiuolo 1991, p. 376.

This line alludes, in fact, to the end of the *Georgics* (iv. 563–566):

Illo Vergilium, me tempore dulcis alebat,  
Parthenope studiis florentem ignobilis oti,  
carmina qui lusi pastorum audaxque iuventa,  
Tityre, te patulae cecini sub tegmine fagi.

The allusion is proven by the presence of the same opening, *carmina qui...*, and the use of the same words, although in new agreements, *studium* and *florens*. It is probable that the same line also alludes to the lines which, already in Boethius' time, had been handed down as the *Aeneid* preamble:<sup>30</sup>

Ille ego qui quondam gracili modulatus avena  
carmen et egressus silvis vicina coegi  
ut quamvis avido parerent arva colono,  
gratum opus agricolis, at nunc horrentia Martis  
arma virumque cano.

I do not wish to discuss the authenticity of this preamble here:<sup>31</sup> in the late antique period it was handed down as a preface to the *Aeneid* and Boethius could have alluded to it, while he was declaring his poetical aim.

On the contrary, there is no agreement between the first foot and first word of the line in the other elegiac poem, v. m. 1, except for only one irrelevant line, the 11<sup>th</sup>.

11 Sic quae permissis  SSDDDS  
fluitare videtur habenis

It is significant that there is no reference to Virgil in this poem, as is clear from Gruber's own comment.<sup>32</sup>

My final consideration regards pieces of i. m. 1, in which there are many references to Ovid.<sup>33</sup> Among these, thanks to the metrical analysis, I would like to highlight those related to *ex Pont.* i. 4, dedicated to Ovid's wife. Boethius begins his poem

<sup>30</sup> Alfonsi 1984.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Conte 1974, pp. 62–64.

<sup>32</sup> Gruber 2006, pp. 373–374.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Gruber 2006, pp. 54–61.

by regretting his youth, during which he composed rural poetry, as the *Anecdoton Holderi*<sup>34</sup> attests.<sup>35</sup> Now that he is prematurely aged, he is able to write only elegiac poetry because of the sorrow he feels.

It is striking to observe that in ll. 9–10 (*venit enim properata malis inopina senectus | et dolor aetatem iussit inesse suam*) the structure of the couplet and the content refer to Ov. *ex Pont.* 1. 4. 19–20 *Me quoque debilitat series immensa malorum, | ante meum tempus cogit et esse senem*. The caesuras isolate *properata malis* and *inopina senectus* in Boethius' poem, like *debilitat* and *series immensa malorum* in Ovid's letter. In both pentameters, moreover, premature old age is brought to the fore. Furthermore, in both texts even the physical effect of this premature aging, described according to a *klassische Stilisierung*,<sup>36</sup> strictly concerns the same parts of the body (Boeth. 1. m. 1. 4 *veris elegi fletibus ora rigant*; Ov. 1. 4. 2 *iamque meos vultus ruga senilis arat*; Boeth. 1. m. 1. 11 *intempestivi funduntur vertice canis*; Ov. 1. 4. 1 *iam mihi deterior canis aspergitur aetas*; Boeth. 1. m. 1. 12 *et tremit effeto corpore laxa cutis*; Ov. 1. 4. 3 *iam vigor et quasso languent in corpore vires*).

On the other hand, in the second part of their texts the two authors express their lament with different images. Boethius introduces the theme of the volatility of Fortune while Ovid elaborates two comparisons: the first is between him and Jason, while the second is between him and Odysseus.<sup>37</sup> The second comparison ends with a speech to his wife, who is imagined prematurely aged because of her husband's tragic circumstances.

It is possible, or at least beguiling to think, that Boethius, by using the reference to Ovid, speaks of the sorrow he feels for the absence of his wife, who remains unnamed in the *De Consolatione*. Another more persuasive hypothesis – which is still a hypothesis, however – is that Boethius, by using this reference, may intend to allude to Philosophy herself, who appears immediately after this poem and is the only female who consoles Boethius.

<sup>34</sup> Usener 1877.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Shanzer 2009, p. 230: 'His lost bucolic verse is attested by the *Anecdoton Holderi*: *condidit et carmen bucolicum*'.

<sup>36</sup> Gruber 2006, p. 59.

<sup>37</sup> Gaertner 2005, pp. 272–305.

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### *Abstract*

This paper focuses on the relationship between the use of metres – especially elegiac couplets and anapests – and contents in some poems of Boethius' *De consolatione Philosophiae*. On the one hand, the use of the anapest as a possible marker of reminiscence is examined: Boeth. *cons.* II. m. 5 is compared with Sen. *Med.* 301–379.

On the other hand, examples are provided of analysis based on sense-correspondence, a criterion that links anapests to elegiac couplets and, in combination with caesuras, helps identify intertextuality and allusiveness: at this point, firstly Boeth. *cons.* i. m. 1. 11, and secondly Boeth. *cons.* i. m. 1. 9 and Ov. *ex Pont.* i. 4. 1–58 are discussed.

VINCENT ZARINI

## APPUNTI SULLA POETICA ENNODIANA: NUOVE DECLINAZIONI DELLA *SILVA* NELLA LATINITÀ TARDOANTICA \*

*Alla cara memoria  
di Jacques Fontaine (1922-2015),  
maestro insuperabile*

Giustamente definito da Stefanie Kennell un ‘gentleman della Chiesa’,<sup>1</sup> Magno Felice Ennodio è un aristocratico gallo-romano, nato ad Arles verso il 474; chierico passato dalla Chiesa di Pavia a quella di Milano verso il 496, diacono attorno al 503, vescovo di Pavia dal 513 circa fino alla morte nel 521, ha lasciato un’ampia produzione letteraria databile all’inizio del VI secolo, prima che la sua elezione all’episcopato lo inducesse – fatto consueto in simili circostanze – a rinunciare alla letteratura profana. La sua opera, di interpretazione spesso assai difficile e comprendente diverse centinaia di pagine nelle due edizioni di riferimento, quella di Wilhelm von Hartel (CSEL, Wien, 1882) e quella di Friedrich Vogel (MGH, Berlin, 1885), è stata oggetto di molteplici studi in tempi recenti. Benché numerosi contributi riguardino la poesia di Ennodio,<sup>2</sup> nessuno di essi indaga però l’influsso che il genere della *silva* esercitò sui suoi scritti; tale lacuna giustifica l’intento della mia analisi, che pure ha tra i suoi limiti il fatto di non essere condotta da uno specialista dell’autore.

\* Questo saggio è la traduzione italiana di un articolo (*L’écriture de la silve dans les poèmes d’Ennode*) pubblicato nel volume miscelaneo intitolato *La silve. Histoire d’une écriture libérée en Europe de l’Antiquité au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, a cura di Perrine Galand e Sylvie Laigneau-Fontaine, Brepols, Turnhout, 2013, pp. 237–250. L’autore ringrazia le edizioni Brepols per aver acconsentito alla traduzione e la dott.ssa Cecilia Pavarani, dell’Università degli Studi di Milano, per averla eseguita con la massima cura.

<sup>1</sup> Kennell 2000.

<sup>2</sup> Cf., tra gli altri, Di Rienzo 2005, Vandone 2004 e numerosi contributi negli *Atti delle giornate ennodiane* (Gasti 2001; D’Angelo 2003; Gasti 2006a).

Sebbene non siano rintracciabili espliciti riferimenti alla *silva* nel corpus di Ennodio, quest'ultimo mostra tuttavia parecchi tratti riconducibili a tale genere poetico, un'affinità che persino una lettura cursoria dei testi lascia intendere. Nei manoscritti che le hanno tramandate, le opere di Ennodio mescolano in effetti tutti i generi, secondo un ordine grosso modo cronologico: i carmi (in due libri nell'edizione di von Hartel, secondo la classificazione per generi che si deve a Jacques Sirmond) s'inseriscono anche in alcune lettere, in *dictiones* e in opuscoli di varia natura; e pure queste stesse tipologie di testi combinano volentieri versi e prosa: basti pensare alla *dictio* per i trent'anni di sacerdozio di Epifanio di Pavia (I. 9) o alla *Paraenesis didascalica* (opusc. 6); diversi carmi, inoltre, giustappongono con sfoggio erudito metri differenti, in maniera spesso inattesa, come l'epitalamio per Massimo (I. 4) studiato da Franca Ela Consolino.<sup>3</sup> Da tale varietà formale deriva all'insieme un aspetto disorganico, cui concorrono due ulteriori fattori: in primo luogo l'aver Ennodio composto spesso poesia su incarico di amici e, in secondo luogo, la preminenza che l'epidittica sovente assume nei confronti della morale: si dirà delle idee assai poco cristiane, come ben sanno gli specialisti, che Ennodio presta alla Retorica nella *Paraenesis didascalica*.

Già questi pochi cenni sono sufficienti a evocare le *Silvae* di Stazio e la loro celebre prefazione, ma pure le severe riflessioni di Quintiliano riguardo a questa scrittura libera e impetuosa (*inst.* x. 3. 17) e certi aspetti della poesia di Sidonio, al quale del resto Ennodio era apparentato. Mi è dunque parso legittimo proporre in questa sede qualche riflessione su un argomento piuttosto nuovo: esplorerò dapprima il tema dei sentimenti – per così dire l'‘affettività’ della poesia ennodiana –, poi la sua estetica, infine la ‘conversione’ della *silva* nell'opera di questo strano uomo di Chiesa.

### 1. L' ‘affettività’ della *silva*

È senza dubbio il carme intitolato *Praefatio totius operis poetici quod fecit* (II. 66) a esprimere al meglio lo spirito ‘silvano’ di Enno-

<sup>3</sup> In Consolino 2009 e 2013.



dio: dopo due distici elegiaci in cui evoca, sulle orme del *Car-men* 68 di Catullo, la sua *mens anxia* travagliata da innumerevoli burrasche, il poeta aggiunge (vv. 5-10):

Pierius menti calor incidit; indiga serti  
tempora mox cinxit laurus Apollinea.  
Tunc hederæ viridis rubuerunt fronte corymbi,  
Castalii mellis murmura blanda bibi.  
Continuo, ponens marcentes pectore curas,  
complector laudem, carmina, laetitiam.

Senza voler qui riprendere integralmente il commento di Daniele Di Rienzo a questi versi introduttivi,<sup>4</sup> segnalo però – in relazione al nostro tema – l'interesse dell'allusione a Stazio qui affiorante: al v. 3 del I libro della sua *Tebaide* il poeta napoletano – come osserva Di Rienzo – scrive: *Pierius menti calor incidit*; ma è ancor più significativo il rimando a un altro passo staziano che Ennodio poté avere in mente, la famosa prefazione al I libro delle *Silvæ*, in cui un *subitus calor* invita il poeta a comporre carmi d'occasione. La creazione poetica, per Ennodio, deve avvenire nella gioia: è questo il sentimento che egli prova quando cavalca al galoppo nell'aria fresca dell'alba, immerso in un *tacitus splendor* capace di svincolarlo dai *curarum fasces* e di donargli leggerezza e gaiezza (II. 128); gioiosa è anche l'ebbrezza della vendemmia che induce il lettore a perdonare un errore di metrica proprio nel carme in cui il poeta si dice desideroso d'immortalità (II. 67), aspirazione che sarà peraltro confermata anche in seguito, al v. 7 del suo epitafio. Si pensi pure al più corposo componimento che rievoca un viaggio a Briançon (I. 1),<sup>5</sup> condotto in un clima prima infuocato e poi gelido (vv. 1-40), un fastidioso sbalzo di temperatura che il poeta dimentica dinanzi ai *gaudia magna* (v. 48) suscitati dalla visita alle tombe dei santi (vv. 41-52).

La prefazione in prosa della *Dictio quando de Roma rediit* (I. 6), dedicata a un *insignium adulescens virtutum*, moltiplica anch'essa gli accenni alla gioia (*hilaritas*, *laetitia*, *gaudia*, *exultatio* sono altre declinazioni del medesimo stato d'animo), ilarità che trova un'espressione tutta particolare nella declamazione (*das pellere*

<sup>4</sup> Di Rienzo 2005, pp. 20-23.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Perini 2012, Cerutti 2005-2006 e, più in breve, Soler 2005, p. 349 s.

*ad afflictionis glaciem, et ad vernum me dictionis invitas. Nam dum quod tu debes studiis, ego inpendo laetitiae, puto, ambo proficimus*); poi è la volta della poesia stessa, che si apre con un paragone tra il poeta e un marinaio ansioso di affrontare il mare a inverno concluso, dopo i *discrimina* che eliminano i *gaudia* (v. 11): una preghiera a Cristo perché protegga la *rimosa puppis* del poeta (v. 32) lascia tuttavia sperare il ritorno della gioia, necessaria alla composizione di versi (*Tristia nil capiunt pectora versiloqui*, v. 36); Ennodio conclude poi, pensando ai suoi inni, sui quali tornerò in seguito (vv. 37-40):

Sed redeat vernum, cesset iam bruma timoris.  
Stringite quae nectant frondea sarta comas:  
cantem quae solitus, dum plebem pasceret ore,  
Ambrosius vates carmina pulcra loqui.

Da questi esempi è evidente che la gioia dello scrittore assume spesso i colori della primavera, presenti anche nella raffigurazione della *gaudens infantia mundi* (v. 9) posta in apertura al carme 1. 3, composto per il nipote del poeta Proculus; la gioia è anche associata frequentemente ai motivi tradizionali dell'ispirazione pagana, ad Apollo e alle Muse, a Pegaso, alle *hederae* e ai *corymbi*, anche quando Ennodio domanda ad Agnellus di regalarli un cavallo vivace, affinché possa comporre versi ilari (11. 109), o come quando a nome di Deuterius sollecita da parte di Eugenius la concessione di un frammento di giardino, con lodi entusiastiche e immagini luminose (1. 2); da ricordare è pure l'avvio dell'epitalamio di Maximus (1. 4). Il carme 1. 6 or ora citato, però, associa a Cristo questa stessa allegrezza, allorché il diacono Ennodio rientra da un sinodo romano alla fine del 502 o all'inizio del 503: ritornerò su questo punto più avanti.

L'importanza dei sentimenti nel corpus ennodiano può essere ricollegata alla *silva* in un senso più ampio: abbiamo detto della gioia, veniamo ora al dolore. Il Libro 11 dei carmi riunisce numerosi epitafi, il più toccante dei quali è senza dubbio 11. 1, dedicato al ricordo di un giovane scomparso prematuramente (non è improbabile, però, che il giovane in questione sia 'creatura' solo letteraria).<sup>6</sup> Da analizzare in questo senso è pure il carme 1. 5, *Iti-*

<sup>6</sup> Cf. l'analisi di Di Rienzo 2005, pp. 25-30.

*nerarium* che rievoca un viaggio autunnale, intrapreso mentre una rovinosa piena del Po sradica intere foreste: Ennodio va a trovare la sorella che ha perduto un figlio e si dice *ferventi germanae tractus amore* (v. 22): *sic pietas elementa domat*, aggiunge al v. 31, commentando il pericoloso viaggio che lo vede sfidare le intemperie *Christo duce* (v. 52). Di tutt'altro tono sono gli epigrammi satirici riuniti da Daniele Di Rienzo;<sup>7</sup> essi mostrano uno scrittore dal carattere mordace e la cui suscettibilità è del resto assai ben attestata anche altrove.<sup>8</sup> In numerosi casi il nostro poeta, spesso accusato di 'freddezza', adotta un ethos caloroso: nella prefazione all'intera opera, per esempio, oppure quando spera che il professore dei nipoti di Proculus stimoli il loro *fervor* per gli studi (I. 3. 20), o ancora quando attribuisce alla grammatica, come missione, quella di condurre gli allievi senza un rigore eccessivo *ad Tullianum calorem scintillis praefigurati vaporis* (*opusc.* 6. 11). Si pensi pure all'apertura del carme I. 7 indirizzato a Faustus, dove Ennodio afferma che i versi del dedicatario mescolano l'acqua al fuoco, come le sorgenti di Abano descritte in *epist.* v. 8; ma su questo passo molto interessante mi pare che Gianluca Vandone abbia già detto tutto.<sup>9</sup>

Un ulteriore tratto di affettività 'silvana' in Ennodio lega la produzione poetica all'oratoria epidittica:<sup>10</sup> si tratta del biasimo – più feroce che sorridente – che, come accennato sopra, domina negli epigrammi satirici; ma penso soprattutto all'elogio largamente prodigato dal poeta ai destinatari delle sue opere, vivi o defunti, uomini o donne, laici o ecclesiastici: Daniele Di Rienzo ha ben messo in luce tale carattere a proposito dei componimenti brevi del Libro II, Gianluca Vandone e Franca Ela Consolino lo hanno rilevato invece a proposito di alcuni carmi del Libro I. L'inevitabile contropartita di quest'ultimo aspetto è il ricco sviluppo del *locus humilitatis*, di cui Ernst Robert Curtius ha bene illustrato il dilagare nella letteratura imperiale e in

<sup>7</sup> Di Rienzo 2005, p. 157 s.

<sup>8</sup> Si veda per esempio l'epistola v. 29 a Beatus, su un preteso errore di metrica.

<sup>9</sup> Vandone 2004, pp. 21-25 (con rimandi aggiuntivi, a proposito di questo tema, ad *epist.* v. 9 e III. 12) e 65 s.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Vandone 2004, pp. 35-37.

quella successiva.<sup>11</sup> Per non appesantire il presente studio mi sembra opportuno rimandare ancora, a questo proposito, al saggio di Vandone.<sup>12</sup> Assai rari sono peraltro i componimenti in cui il biasimo o l'elogio sono prioritariamente legati a un giudizio di natura morale.

Sempre alla sfera epidittica si associa il desiderio di successo pubblico espresso da Ennodio: il Nostro frequenta i grandi, è egli stesso un aristocratico e pratica le *recitationes*;<sup>13</sup> sottolinea la necessità di brillare nei generi letterari mondani non solo quando si rivolge ai suoi giovani corrispondenti,<sup>14</sup> ma ricorda il medesimo dovere anche ai futuri ecclesiastici che frequentano il palazzo episcopale di Milano per ricevervi una formazione, come mostrano il carme II. 16, ampiamente commentato da Di Rienzo, con alcuni riferimenti ad Agostino,<sup>15</sup> e la prefazione al carme I. 9. Questa *dictio* in versi con la quale, nell'anno 496, Ennodio celebra i trent'anni di sacerdozio di Epifanio di Pavia, non sostiene nulla di diverso: in essa Ennodio si difende dai riproveri di chi potrebbe ritenere tale discorso bizzarro e fuori luogo sulla bocca di un ecclesiastico (*cur recitet publice quem laus nec decet publica nec delectat?*), riprende da Ambrogio – dall'inizio del *De officiis* (I. 2. 5 s.) – la nozione di *otiosa silentia* e giustifica il suo prendere la parola con l'uso degli inni e con riferimenti alla Scrittura: ciò che tutt'al più ci si deve interdire è per Ennodio la *sentina carminum*, ovvero le favole menzognere dei poeti antichi. Nel carme I. 8 a Olybrius il diacono riconosce che *famam petit undique lector* (v. 53), ma non è più in grado di ottenere un *mansurum sophos* (v. 34) e ne soffre manifestamente, lui che, nell'ultimo verso della *praefatio* – prima citata – alla sua opera poetica (II. 66), collegava in maniera esplicita *laus, carmina e laetitia*.

Ed è ancora alle pratiche dell'epidittica che si deve ricondurre, a mio avviso, il rifiuto dell'austerità, un atteggiamento che va di pari passo con il desiderio di successo. La *Paraenesis dida-*

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Curtius 1986, I, p. 154 s.

<sup>12</sup> Vandone 2004, pp. 38-40.

<sup>13</sup> Vd. Vandone 2004, p. 117.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. *epist.* VIII. 2 ad Avienus e VIII. 11 ad Arator, con il commento di Joëlle Schröder (Schröder 2007, pp. 104-105) sulla necessità dell'*ostentatio* in Ennodio.

<sup>15</sup> Di Rienzo 2005, pp. 97-102.

*scalica*, indirizzata ai giovani Ambrosius e Beatus, si fonda sulla mescolanza, in un prosimetro polimetrico, della *fortis elocutio* della prosa con il *mollior stilus* dei versi (*opusc.* 6, 3), e, se la *laus versuum* iniziale intende promuovere una poesia vigorosa e veridica ‘ad uso e consumo’ dei *Christi milites*, il suo autore vi dichiara nondimeno che ‘la virtù non sempre si addice a una poesia’ fondata dalle Camene su una dolcezza seducente (v. 5); quanto a *Castitas*, ella rivendica sì, un poco più avanti, la croce come lancia, scudo e armatura – evidente reminiscenza paolina (Eph. 6. 13-17) – ma rifiuta di ‘mostrare un viso costantemente afflitto’ (v. 7).

## 2. *L'estetica della silva*

Dopo aver studiato i principali tratti che avvicinano Ennodio all'affettività della *silva*, conviene ora considerare quegli elementi che in essa tendono a rinviarci all'estetica definita da Stazio e da Quintiliano. Si tratta innanzitutto di una forma di ostentata disinvoltura, quella *levitas* biasimata da Quintiliano e fatta propria dal nostro poeta, un atteggiamento che si esplica per esempio nel rifiuto dei generi alti, constatabile nella pratica e rivendicato nella teoria: è così che i vv. 47-52 del carme 8 esprimono in tono malinconico l'inadeguatezza di Ennodio a comporre elegia, epica e tragedia.<sup>16</sup> A lunghe composizioni è inoltre preferita una relativa brevità, che il più delle volte può giungere fino alla densità epigrammatica.<sup>17</sup> Ma ciò che più colpisce è l'insistita rivendicazione della facilità e dell'improvvisazione, che Vandone mette giustamente in rapporto con le tendenze esibite da Stazio, Ausonio o Sidonio.<sup>18</sup> La lettera VIII. 11 ad Aratore si chiude con l'indicazione del tempo impiegato a comporla: Ennodio afferma di averla dettata – testimone Dio stesso – mentre rientrava dalla basilica a passo di corsa; numerosi carmi brevi, inoltre, recano i segni della stessa celerità d'elaborazione di cui si vantava Stazio nella sua prefazione. Diversi di questi carmi riportano perfino nel titolo la menzione *ex tempore*, da cui Di Rienzo trae argomento

<sup>16</sup> Vandone 2004, pp. 162-165.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Bernt 1968, p. 97 s. su Ennodio.

<sup>18</sup> Vandone 2004, p. 115.

in merito alla questione dell'autenticità dei titoli interessati.<sup>19</sup> L'epistola v. 7 a Euprepia accompagna un epitafio che Ennodio compose per Cynegia in un'ora, *vix una hora habens tractandi spatium, inelimitata velocitate*; ma l'epistola vii. 29 informa che la destinataria si è lamentata del fatto che il suo sepolcro non sia stato debitamente onorato *laude ducti in carmen eloquii*; al Nostro, tocca allora proporre un secondo epitafio.<sup>20</sup> Fra i numerosi esempi di versi *ex tempore* o *facti subito*, si potrebbero citare i monodistici di ii. 57, 58 e 59 che attaccano un Goto vestito alla romana; ii. 142 che ricorda la disputa sull'altare della Vittoria, con una discreta *pointe* contro un Boezio legato ai Simmaci;<sup>21</sup> il carme ii. 105, che invita Arator – non senza gravità agli occhi di un lettore moderni – a *colere* il suo compleanno per ben meritare il suo nome; o, infine, il carme ii. 107 ad Agnellus, più virtuoso dei precedenti per la combinazione di una strofe saffica e quattro tetrametri trocaici. E d'altra parte, le prime parole della prefazione in prosa del carme i. 7 a Faustus, non definiscono proprio la scrittura come una *scabies*?

Altri elementi caratteristici dell'estetica della *silva* sono rintracciabili in Ennodio. Mi riferisco al gusto per lo splendore, per la luce, nella raffigurazione delle attività culturali. Nel carme ii. 150, per esempio, gli aristocratici sono invitati a esporre i loro figli ai raggi della cultura come le aquile espongono i loro ai raggi del sole;<sup>22</sup> innumerevoli sono le immagini luminose di questo tipo – come in i. 2 – e Stéphane Gioanni ne ha mostrato l'importanza nelle lettere di Ennodio.<sup>23</sup> A questo brillio solare si riconduce una ricca profusione d'immagini. Significativo è lo scintillante ritratto di Ambrogio che apre la serie di carmi destinati a commemorare i vescovi di Milano (ii. 77), diverso dal ben più sobrio inno dedicato al medesimo santo (i. 15); lo stesso dicasi riguardo al componimento che parla degli epigrammi coi quali Faustus ha adornato la sua biblioteca: nel carme ii. 3, infatti, Ennodio associa valori diversi – erudizione e ric-

<sup>19</sup> Di Rienzo 2005, pp. 224 e 230.

<sup>20</sup> Su questi due epitafi vd. Brocca 2006.

<sup>21</sup> Si veda l'analisi di Di Rienzo 2005, p. 197.

<sup>22</sup> Cf., oltre a Di Rienzo 2005 (pp. 213-215), De Lucia 2006.

<sup>23</sup> Gioanni 2006, p. lxxxix s.

chezza, gioia e moralità – nell’evocare una collezione di libri dalla quale nessuna branca del sapere profano o religioso pare esclusa. Aggiungiamo un gusto certo per la dolcezza<sup>24</sup> e insieme per il fasto,<sup>25</sup> e una sensibilità neo-alessandrina o pre-barocca che può assumere diverse forme: in primo luogo, quella della meraviglia, che si nota nella descrizione della fontana fatta installare dal vescovo Eustorgio nel battistero di Santo Stefano e nella quale l’acqua scende dall’alto grazie a un meccanismo di difficile comprensione (II. 149);<sup>26</sup> o nella raffigurazione di pezzi d’oreficeria insoliti per la leggerezza quasi aerea (II. 46-49), la finissima lavorazione (II. 98) o la strana destinazione (II. 114-116).<sup>27</sup> Ennodio è poi affascinato dall’*adynaton* – come ben rileva Bianca-Jeanette Schröder a proposito di diversi carmi,<sup>28</sup> e specialmente del carme I. 7 per Faustus – e ricorre sovente al paradosso: tale predilezione si esprime nel motivo della *mors mortis*, negli epitafi riuniti da Daniele Di Rienzo,<sup>29</sup> o nell’abbinamento di lusso e crudeltà nei monodistici che evocano la frusta dorata del giovane Arator (II. 114-116) o, infine, nella visione fugace di un uccello trasportato all’asciutto dalle onde spumeggianti del Po in piena (II. 134). L’impressione dominante è quella del preziosismo ricercato, che vede l’*ars* prevalere sull’*ingenium*:<sup>30</sup> in II. 68, del resto, l’attività letteraria è definita *sanctus labor*.

Collegeremo infine all’estetica della *silva* ancora tre aspetti, legati ai precedenti. Si tratta innanzitutto del tema della natura domata dall’uomo, che da Stazio si estende fino ad Ausonio e a Sidonio. Un carme, destinato a un palazzo episcopale e di difficile interpretazione,<sup>31</sup> si conclude con il seguente distico: *Celsa tenebroso frondescunt arbusta luxu / quae nullis strinxit falcibus agricola* (II. 15. 9-10). Il contesto religioso può indurre a leggere

<sup>24</sup> Vandone 2004, p. 116.

<sup>25</sup> Vd. l’indice dell’edizione Vogel, p. 402, *s.vv. pompa dicendi-declamatorium / pomposus*.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Di Rienzo 2005, pp. 112-114.

<sup>27</sup> L’importanza del mondo materiale e degli oggetti d’arte in Ennodio è ben messa in luce da Kennell 2000, p. 85 s.

<sup>28</sup> Schröder 2007, pp. 106-108.

<sup>29</sup> Si vedano soprattutto i carmi di p. 30 s. e quello di p. 116 (II. 20).

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Vandone 2004, pp. 25-34, per una sintesi molto pertinente su questo punto importante, a partire dalle riflessioni di Ennodio sull’arte di Faustus.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Di Rienzo 2005, pp. 95-97.

questi versi in un senso che esaminerò fra poco, ma sono innumerevoli i testi, e specialmente le *dictiones*, in cui questa idea si riscontra in contesto profano. Un carne affisso, a quanto pare, all'entrata di un giardino fa l'elogio della cultura letteraria e alla fine recita: *Vertit ad obsequium naturae munera doctus: / aetates, species, mensuras, tempora, formas* (II. 44, 11-12). I versi dedicati al giardino di Teodorico nel suo palazzo di Pavia sottolineano, in una sorta di allegoria panegiristica, la dimensione sociale e divina del giardinaggio che il re vi pratica dopo la guerra, in un'atmosfera edenica (II. 111).<sup>32</sup> Nei carmi riuniti da Di Rienzo alle pp. 143-144 del suo commento, tutti riguardanti animali ribelli per natura e tranquillamente domati dall'uomo, si rileverà inoltre l'importanza del motivo dell'*obsequium*, già presente nel *Leo mansuetus* di Stazio (*silv.* II. 5).

Di fronte a questa natura accuratamente domata, è magnificata l'arte, soprattutto nelle iscrizioni destinate alle chiese: dappertutto vi è sviluppato l'elogio dell'arte – della costruzione o del restauro – degli operai e del loro lavoro.<sup>33</sup> È ancora l'arte che, nel carne II. 91, riproduce la natura e la supera perfino, conferendo il carattere di rappresentazione unitaria alla disparità dei frammenti in una composizione in *opus sectile*. Ma per esaurire tale motivo topico dovremmo leggere un'infinità di epigrammi Ennodio: accontentiamoci perciò di ricordare il famoso ciclo da lui consacrato a una coppa istoriata che rappresenta con una perfetta illusione di realtà Pasifae e il suo toro.<sup>34</sup> E se l'arte è a tal punto celebrata, è perché la poesia è creatrice. Bianca-Jeanette Schröder rinvia, a questo proposito, all'epistola I. 6, nella quale Ennodio si compiace di fornire una rappresentazione orrida del lago di Como e delle sue famose delizie,<sup>35</sup> per poi introdurre il carne II. 7 a Faustus. Uno dei tratti più rimarchevoli di quest'ultimo è senza dubbio il paragone tra creazione letteraria e creazione divina: esso si legge dapprima nel secondo paragrafo della prefazione in prosa (*Est vobis quoddam cum hominum factore collegium: ille finxit ex nihilo; vos reparatis in melius*),

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Di Rienzo 2005, pp. 139-143 e Gasti 2006b.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Di Rienzo 2005, p. 77 ss.

<sup>34</sup> I carmi sono riuniti e commentati in Di Rienzo 2005, pp. 130-134.

<sup>35</sup> Schröder 2007, p. 106; cf. anche Gioanni 2006, pp. 18-20 e 107-110.



poi ai vv. 19-20 (*Tu verbis faciem tribuis, modulamine membra. / Quod natura Deo, hoc tibi dant studia*), che sono seguiti da una serie di *adynata* (vv. 21-30). Il primo di essi, benché probabilmente non vada incontro al gusto di tutti, colpisce per la sua arditezza (*In vetulum dexter si veritas plectra cadaver, / primaevum facias, aedificante lyra*). Il commento di Gianluca Vandone, solitamente molto ricco, risulta piuttosto discreto riguardo a questi passi;<sup>36</sup> ne riprenderemo soprattutto l'individuazione di un precedente macrobiano (da *Sat.* v. 1. 18 – 2. 1), passo in cui l'opera poetica di Virgilio è paragonata all'opera creatrice di Dio, e si prova sorpresa a leggere questi versi in un uomo di Chiesa. Ma Schröder va oltre e, mostrando il legame frequente tra *adynaton* poetico ed epifania divina, evidenzia la forza delle parole di Ennodio, osservando che, mentre secondo Godo Lieberg si deve attendere Giulio Cesare Scaligero e la sua *Poetica* del 1561 per trovare un'espressione formale del carattere creatore dell'atto poetico, Ennodio ce ne fornirebbe una circa mille anni prima, situando la poesia fra imitazione e creazione.<sup>37</sup> Ugualmente, la Retorica in persona proclama altrove (*opusc.* 6. 15) che ella sola, subito dopo la divinità, ha il potere di creare o di modificare ciò che è stato creato. In ogni caso, questa 'divinizzazione delle lettere'<sup>38</sup> non poteva non porre qualche problema a un membro della Chiesa, e – per concludere – mi chiederò se Ennodio seppe 'convertire' la *silva*.

### 3. Una 'conversione' della *silva*?

Sotto questo profilo è interessante la *dictio* sopra menzionata, composta nel 496, all'inizio della carriera letteraria di Ennodio, per il trentesimo anniversario dell'ordinazione sacerdotale di Epifanio di Pavia: vi si legge, infatti, il tentativo da parte del nostro ancor giovane autore di adattare il suo *ethos* 'silvano' a un quadro ecclesiastico. Si tratta di un elogio pubblico, una prassi che la prefazione in prosa giustifica, come si è visto; la

<sup>36</sup> Vandone 2004, pp. 30-31 e 74-79.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Schröder 2007, pp. 106-109.

<sup>38</sup> Studiata da Kennell 2000, p. 43 s.

valorizzazione del *laudandus* è tuttavia affidata agli esametri; una volta espresso il tradizionale rifiuto della poesia pagana e del suo *doctior error* (v. 7), una volta ripudiati Febo e le Muse, Castalia e Pallade, e invocato lo Spirito Santo – come è giusto in ogni poesia cristiana – Ennodio, pur trattando argomenti religiosi, non intende adottare l’austerità: così ci presenta lo splendore radioso di questo bel giorno *quo gaudet mundus, cum non sint gaudia mundi* (v. 40), per poi dipingere il fervore che circondò l’elezione episcopale di Epifanio (v. 51 ss.), e narrare un prodigio luminoso che accompagnò la sua nascita (v. 99 ss.) e che fece versare a suo padre *lacrimas quas promunt gaudia* (v. 114). Si potrebbe anche rinviare ai bellissimi versi 134-161, che evocano l’‘agricoltura spirituale’ praticata dal prelato: il suo zelo riempie di gioia il Signore per l’abbondanza e lo splendore di raccolti ridenti e profumati, e il poema si chiude con il ricordo dei *gaudia* del poeta stesso che recita il carme elogiativo, con gli auguri di lunga vita e con il nome *En-no-di-us* in acrostico, sintomo di una meticolosa tecnica versificatoria (vv. 167-170). Ogni studio approfondito di questo difficile testo deve oggi passare dal bell’articolo di Franca Ela Consolino già ricordato;<sup>39</sup> ma quello che qui ci premeva rilevare è che per il giovane Ennodio essere cristiano non sembrava implicare un atteggiamento troppo austero, e all’inizio del mio intervento abbiamo visto come questa caratteristica si confermasse in numerosi componimenti della maturità.

Potrebbero, tuttavia, suggerire esattamente il contrario l’auto-difesa contenuta nella prefazione del carme I. 9, e – soprattutto – diversi altri testi composti dopo l’accesso al diaconato. Il carme I. 8 a Olybrius esprime chiaramente un disagio di Ennodio: nella prefazione in prosa il nostro poeta mondano si ritrae come *pastor* e si contrappone a un Olybrius *urbanus*, e lo invita a non tentarlo; egli avverte, infatti, il timore e la solitudine derivanti dai *muta nemora*, o ancora si rappresenta come perduto *per nemorum invia*. Che fossero questi i pericoli della *silva* per un ecclesiastico? A questo proposito è indispensabile leggere le osservazioni di Gianluca Vandone, tanto più che, nel

<sup>39</sup> Consolino 2006.

carne, Ennodio si paragona a un Fetonte vinto dal *calor* (v. 24).<sup>40</sup> Nei v. 29 ss., ad ogni modo, il nostro versificatore si lamenta aspramente della propria aridità, della propria sterilità; ha abbandonato i simboli antichi della poesia, e le sole *silvae* che frequenta ancora, *inter spelaea ferarum* (v. 43), come un tempo Epifanio in viaggio,<sup>41</sup> sono quelle dove esercita la sua *agrestis militia*; perché la preoccupazione è di evitare *lactea ne mentem denudent verba solutam*, / *et dictis mollis dicar et ingenio* (vv. 47-48).

Depressione, mutato orientamento, o entrambe le cose? È quel che tenderebbero a suggerire altri testi dello stesso periodo, composti attorno al 503, chiamati in causa da Vandone a proposito del carne i. 8 e di questo problema,<sup>42</sup> in particolare l'epistola i. 16 a Florianus, la ii. 6 a Pomerius, e soprattutto la iii. 24 a Mascator. Io stesso mi sono occupato di questa linea tematica nella corrispondenza con Arator, in particolare nella triste epistola ix. 1, databile tra la fine del 510 e l'inizio del 511.<sup>43</sup> Ma bisognerebbe senz'altro aggiungervi pure le considerazioni sviluppate nei capitoli 5 e 6 di quell'avatar delle *Confessioni* di Agostino che è denominato *Eucharisticum* a partire da Jacques Sirmond; in quest'opera, collocabile negli stessi anni,<sup>44</sup> Ennodio si pente degli applausi che poco prima si dispensava alacramente e a lungo; si duole di quell'orgoglio provato in passato per via del sentirsi poeta fra i poeti, così sprezzando il suo stato di consacrato; si dispiace della soddisfazione tratta dalle proprie abilità metriche e dagli inganni dell'eloquenza, e conclude il misero quadro con un'eco dell'ascesa di Dafni al cielo in Virgilio (*eccl.* 5. 56-57): *et si evenisset ut essem clarorum versuum servata lege formator, sub pedibus meis subiectum quidquid caeli tegitur axe cernebam*.<sup>45</sup> Non si potrebbe rinnegare meglio

<sup>40</sup> Vandone 2004, pp. 105-112.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. *opusc.* 3. 83-84, p. 94 Vogel.

<sup>42</sup> Vandone 2004, pp. 118-120.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Zarini 2009, pp. 325-342 e, soprattutto, 335-338.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Kennell 2000, pp. 5-7 e 23-29.

<sup>45</sup> Si può forse scorgere qui un'ambiguità ricercata sul doppio senso, fisico e metrico, di 'piede'. Quanto all'eco virgiliana rilevata, essa giunge forse a Ennodio tramite il filtro cristiano di Prud., *perist.* 14. 94 s. ('ascensione' di sant'Agnese dopo il martirio).

certa mondanità ‘silvana’, ma neanche l’accidia sembra molto lontana da tali rimorsi.

Ci si può tuttavia domandare se Ennodio non si sia sforzato di ‘convertire’ i suoi ardori inizialmente ‘silvani’ nella sua poesia propriamente religiosa. È così che, nel suo *Hymnus vespertinus* (l. 10), se rigetta il *calor ebrius* (v. 15) suscitato dai sogni notturni, è a profitto del fervore della fede: *vivat fides in pectore / quae luce vernat perpeti* (vv. 31–32). Lo strano inno che segue, *In tempore tristitiae* (l. 11), ha un tono penitenziale, ma la strofe finale dichiara: *In fonte camis ardor est / qui mergit, urit, adficit; / sed si serenus aspicias, / pressura gignet gaudium*, tracciando così un possibile itinerario di conversione dal falso ardore alla vera gioia. In rapporto all’epigramma II. 77, già menzionato, nell’inno l. 15 a sant’Ambrogio si rileva un nuovo orientamento, dal vano splendore all’azione, e dall’eloquenza al dogma, ma questa volta senza più ricordo dell’affettività e dell’estetica dei tempi andati. Il gusto per il paradosso brillante non manca invece nell’inno l. 20 a San Martino, i cui versi 13–14 dichiarano: *Hic, fontis ignem nesciens, / calore fervebat Dei*. Si è qui più vicini al ‘fervorino’ italiano o a slanci ‘giaculatori’? Non sta a noi decidere, ma per conoscere meglio la spiritualità di Ennodio valeva la pena di attendere la recente pubblicazione della tesi di dottorato di Céline Urlacher-Becht, che sostituirà vantaggiosamente l’opuscolo deludente e talvolta erroneo di Marianna Muzzica.<sup>46</sup> Detto questo, il successo limitato degli inni in questione e i giudizi severi su di essi formulati dalla maggioranza degli studiosi tenderebbero a suggerire che tale poesia religiosa non fosse il punto di forza dell’opera di Ennodio, troppo legata al ‘mondo’. Tuttavia, può darsi che agli occhi del nostro autore e del suo pubblico le cose stessero diversamente, e sembra delinearsi una riabilitazione del ruolo di Ennodio come uomo di Chiesa. È tempo, in ogni caso, di concludere.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Muzzica 2003 e la sintesi recente di Di Rienzo 2007, pp. 623–636. Céline Urlacher-Becht ha discusso presso l’Università di Strasburgo, nel giugno 2009, una tesi di dottorato assai voluminosa e notevole intitolata *Ennode de Pavie, chantre officiel de l’Église de Milan*. Édition, traduction, commentaire, che getta nuova luce sull’insieme della poesia religiosa di Ennodio, *Inni* compresi. Si veda adesso Urlacher-Becht 2014, pp. 265 ss.

Benché i termini *silva*, *nemus* e i loro derivati non siano assenti dalla poesia di Ennodio, essa non si presenta mai esplicitamente come affiliata al genere della *silva*. In questo breve saggio si è tuttavia tentato di mostrare come i carmi profani del corpus ennodiano testimonino un'affettività che si riallaccia a tale genere, con un bisogno di ardore e di gioia, di sentimenti vivaci, con il gusto del biasimo e dell'elogio; e anche per l'estetica di questi carmi, fatta di disinvoltura apparente, di preziosità 'barocca', di padronanza artistica. Ma la conversione cristiana di questa scrittura 'silvana' non va da sé per il diacono milanese, e, se la sua poesia religiosa di stampo epidittico può a rigore adattarsi, il lirismo più spirituale di Ennodio si converte in maniera incompleta a un quadro più austero. La gioia interiorizzata e la temperanza stilistica richieste da un cristianesimo autentico, anche senza arrivare all'ascetismo, non erano affatto compatibili con la spontaneità impulsiva e con i valori mondani che caratterizzano la *silva*, e il nostro autore non ha veramente saputo, nei suoi versi, uscire da questo orizzonte piacevole ma limitato. Lo studio dei carmi di Ennodio, scrittore – ribadisco – complesso, da me qui condotto secondo tale prospettiva ha dunque forse, a dispetto delle sue lacune, il merito di far emergere sotto una nuova luce le tensioni già evidenziate da Gianluca Vandone tra statuto ecclesiastico e attività letteraria;<sup>47</sup> questa, almeno, è la mia speranza.

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### *Abstract*

Although, at the beginning of the sixth century, Ennodius of Pavia does not identify his numerous poems as *silvae*, one can find in them several aspects characteristic of that literary genre. This may be seen, first of all, in the frequent presence of warm emotion, linked to epideictic eloquence. Certain aesthetic choices are also noteworthy: *brevitas* and *levitas*, a taste for glitter and surprise, the mastery of nature by art, and exaltation of the artist's creativity. 'Wordly' writing of this sort could be suitable for celebratory religious poems, but Ennodius does not seem to have succeeded in transforming it into more serious and spiritual lyricism.





ROBERTO MORI

*METRICA VIS SACRIS  
NON EST INCOGNITA LIBRIS  
LA BIBLE ET SA FACIES METRICA  
À PARTIR DE LA LETTRE D'ARATOR  
À VIGILE*

L'*Historia apostolica, conversio* en hexamètres des Actes des Apôtres, écrite au VI<sup>e</sup> siècle par Arator, est précédée dans la plupart des manuscrits par une lettre dédicatoire en distiques élégiaques adressée au pape Vigile : en 544 l'auteur en personne aurait déclamé au moins une partie de son poème – et très probablement cette épître – en présence du pontife. À cause de l'importance du destinataire et de son contenu, P. A. Deproost considère ces trente vers comme le véritable prologue de l'*Historia apostolica*, comme il l'affirme avec soin dans des pages où il examine la tradition manuscrite de la lettre, le rôle de la papauté, le personnage de Vigile et son rapport avec Arator.<sup>1</sup>

Dans les huit premiers distiques, celui-ci narre son expérience personnelle et remercie l'évêque de Rome de lui avoir donné une protection à l'intérieur de l'Église ; à la fin de la lettre, où Arator fait encore un éloge du pape (considéré comme un guide, un moniteur et une source d'inspiration), le lecteur s'aperçoit facilement de la dévotion du poète envers le successeur de Pierre.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Deproost 1990, pp. 58–73.

<sup>2</sup> Arator *ad Vigil.* 1–16 *Moenibus undosis bellorum incendia cernens, / pars ego tunc populi tela paventis eram. / Publica libertas, sanctissime papa Vigili, / advenis incluso solvere vincla gregi. / [5] De gladiis rapiuntur oves pastore ministro / inque humeris ferimur te revocante piis. / Corporeum satis est sic evasisse periculum, / at mihi plus animae nascitur inde salus. / Ecclesiam subeo dimissa naufragus aula ; / [10] perfida mundani desero vela freti. / Transferor ad niveas Petri sine turbine caulas / Et fruor optati iam statione soli. / Litoris ille sinus ad carbasa nostra paravit / Fluctibus in mediis cui via sicca fuit. / [15] Esse reus potero, grates si reddere cessem. / Unius officio displicuere novem.* Cf. aussi *ad Vigil.* 27–30 *Hoc tibi, magne Pater, cum defero munus amoris, /*

Je voudrais ici analyser les vers 17–26 de la lettre, où l’auteur rend explicite la matière de son chant, nomme l’hypotexte qu’il utilise en tant que source, éclaire la façon dont il faut lire son poème et justifie l’usage de la poésie par des exemples de textes sacrés métriques :

Sensibus ardor inest horum celebrare labores,  
 quorum voce fides obtinet orbis iter.  
 Versibus ergo canam quos Lucas rettulit Actus,  
 historiamque sequens carmina vera loquar. 20  
 Alternis reserabo modis, quod littera pandit  
 et res si qua mihi mystica corde datur.  
 Metrica vis sacris non est incognita libris :  
 psalterium lyrici composuere pedes ;  
 hexametris constare sonis in origine linguae 25  
 cantica, Hieremiae, Iob quoque dicta ferunt.

Arator veut donc décrire les entreprises des apôtres grâce auxquelles la foi a été répandue dans le monde ; par conséquent, il décide de raconter en vers leurs *res gestae*, en suivant la narration des Actes des Apôtres et en confectionnant ainsi *carmina vera* (v. 20). Comme le montrent plusieurs études,<sup>3</sup> Arator prétend représenter des faits réels : ceci s’inscrit consciemment dans la tradition inaugurée par Juvencus, qui oppose les actions authentiques du Christ et des saints aux mensonges des poètes anciens.<sup>4</sup>

Toutefois, il ne faut pas interpréter ces événements seulement dans un sens littéral, mais aussi les comprendre plus profondément dans leur signification allégorique, la *res mystica* du vers 22 : expert de l’enseignement d’Origène, Arator accentue la tendance à la préfiguration déjà évidente dans le poème de Sédulius et envisage tous les détails du texte sacré, de sorte que – comme l’a montré très efficacement B. Bureau<sup>5</sup> – la *littera* dont il parle

*respice quod meritis debita solvo tuis ! / Te duce tiro legor, te dogmata disco magistro ; / si quid ab ore placet, laus monitoris erit.* Le texte d’Arator est celui de l’édition Orbán 2006.

<sup>3</sup> Deproost 1990, p. 67, qui cite Iuvenc. *praef.* 1 ; Sedul. *carm. pasch.* i. 17 ; Ennod. *carm.* i. 9. 1. Pour ce qui concerne l’opposition entre les *ficta* des poètes païens et les *facta* narrés par les chrétiens cf. Deproost 1998.

<sup>4</sup> À propos de la *praefatio* de Juvencus cf. Nazzaro 2012 et sa bibliographie.

<sup>5</sup> Bureau 1997, p. 173.

dans cette lettre est déjà une lecture qui prépare à l'interprétation allégorique et typologique qu'il donne pour presque chaque événement décrit.

Ensuite Arator rappelle que la force de la poésie est reconnue même par les auteurs de la Bible : deux siècles après Juvencus, il ne semblerait plus nécessaire de fournir des justifications pour avoir fait une paraphrase en vers des Écritures, comme on peut le lire encore dans l'épître qui précède le *Carmen Paschale* de Sédulius.<sup>6</sup> Celui-ci argumente le choix du mètre par le critère de la douceur qui pousse le lecteur à aimer la poésie d'un point de vue formel et par conséquent à apprécier son contenu, fait qui était déjà soutenu par Lucrèce et Horace. Arator, par contre, grâce aux auteurs qui l'ont précédé sur ce chemin, ne devrait pas se défendre d'un tel reproche, mais il décide quand même de citer directement des passages de l'Ancien Testament écrits en vers : les Psaumes, les Cantiques, les Lamentations de Jérémie, le livre de Job. Cependant, il ne se contente pas de les indiquer comme des textes en poésie – ce qui ne constituerait pas une surprise – mais il rend explicite le type de mètre classique dans lequel ces parties vétérotestamentaires auraient été écrites *in origine linguae* (v. 25), c'est-à-dire en hébreu : des *lyrici pedes* pour les Psaumes et des hexamètres pour ce qui concerne *Cantica, Hieremiae, Iob quoque dicta* (v. 26).

Ceux qui ont étudié cette lettre d'Arator citent, d'habitude, en note quelques sources ou des auteurs précédents qui partagent cette conception avec notre poète, mais ils n'examinent pas profondément ce point, qui est donc l'objet de ces pages.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Sedul. *epist.* : *Cur autem metrica voluerim haec ratione componere, non differam breviter expedire. Raro, pater optime, sicut vestra quoque perita lectionis assiduitate cognoscit, divinae munera potestatis stilo quisquam huius modulationis aptavit, et multi sunt quos studiorum saecularium disciplina per poeticas magis delicias et carminum voluptates oblectat. Hi quidquid rhetoricae facundiae perlegunt, negligentius adsequuntur, quoniam illud haud diligunt : quod autem versuum viderint blandimento mellitum, tanta cordis aviditate suscipiunt, ut in alta memoria saepius hoc iterando constituent et reponant. Horum itaque mores non repudiandos aestimo sed pro insita consuetudine vel natura tractandos, ut quisque suo magis ingenio voluntarius adquiratur Deo* (texte latin de l'édition Huemer 1885, p. 4. À propos de la lettre cf. aussi Mori 2013).

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Arntzen 1769, col. 79 ; Châtillon 1963, p. 46 n. 76 ; et en particulier Green 2006, p. 264 : 'this is derived directly or indirectly from Jerome, who in *Ep.* 30, 3 analysed the Lamentations of Jeremiah and the *canticum* in Deuteronomy, and certain other works, in terms of classical metres, and who made

C'est très probablement Jérôme qui est la source autorisant Arator à voir dans ces textes une métrique assimilable aux mètres classiques. Celui-ci, dans l'épître 30, dédiée à Paula au sujet du sens étymologique et mystique des lettres de l'alphabet hébreu, parle de versets conçus comme des trimètres iambiques pour les Psaumes 110 et 111 ; de tétramètres pour les Psaumes 118 et 144, ainsi que pour le cantique du Deutéronome ;<sup>8</sup> de *quasi Saffico metro* pour les deux premières séries des Lamentations attribuées à Jérémie (des groupes de trois versets commençants par la même lettre, suivis par un *heroici comma*) ; de trimètres pour la troisième série ; de mètres saphiques pour la suivante et de tétramètres pour le livre des Proverbes.<sup>9</sup> Il est évident que, bien qu'il s'agisse de compositions en poésie, la comparaison entre la métrique classique et la métrique hébraïque est artificielle pour les études modernes, parce que la première s'appuie sur un système quantitatif, tandis que la seconde échappe à des lois fixes.<sup>10</sup> Jérôme, toutefois, devait remarquer des similitudes entre ces textes et les vers de la tradition poétique grecque, même s'il semble être aussi conscient des différences : voilà pourquoi, par exemple, il utilise le mot *quasi* près du syntagme *Saffico metro*.

similar comments in the prefaces to his translation of Eusebius' Chronicle and to his commentary on Job'. En revanche, on trouve une analyse détaillée des auteurs précédents dans un article d'Hilhorst 2003, qui ne consacre que quelques mots à Arator.

<sup>8</sup> Dans les *Petits commentaires sur le Psaumes* (CCSL 72, p. 235), en revanche, Jérôme affirme que ces mêmes textes ont été écrits dans des mètres élégiaques.

<sup>9</sup> Hier. epist. 30. 3 *Ac priusquam de singulis disseram, scire debes quattuor psalmos secundum ordinem Hebraeorum, incipere elementorum : centesimum decimum et centesimum undecimum et hunc de quo nunc scribimus et centesimum quadragesimum quartum, verum in prioribus singulis litteris singulos versiculos, qui trimetro iambico constat, esse subnexos, inferiores vero tetrametro iambico constare, sicuti et Deuteronomii canticum scriptum est ; in centesimo octavodecimo in singulas litteras octoni versus secuntur ; in centesimo quadragesimo quarto singulis litteris singuli versus deputantur. [...] Habes et in Lamentationibus Hieremiae quattuor alfabeti, e quibus duo prima quasi Saffico metro scripta sunt, quia tres versiculos, qui sibi conexi sunt et ab una tantum littera incipiunt, heroici comma concludit ; tertium vero alfabetum trimetro scriptum est et a ternis litteris, sed eisdem, terni versus incipiunt ; quartum alfabetum simile est primo et secundo. Proverbia quoque Salomonis extremum cludit alfabetum, quod tetrametro supputatur.*

<sup>10</sup> La poésie hébraïque se distinguait de la prose grâce à des moyens techniques : des versets avec la même structure que les précédents, des parallélismes, ou bien la modulation de la voix avec l'accompagnement musical. Cf. Broadribb 1999, p. 9.

Ensuite, d'après Arator, c'est toujours en hexamètre qu'auraient été écrits les Cantiques et le livre de Job. Le mot *Cantica*, en fait, pourrait faire référence à plusieurs passages vétérotestamentaires ; l'*Instruction sur le ministère des hymnes et de la louange* de Nicetas de Rémésiana, mort vers 414, évoque par exemple sept cantiques de l'Ancien Testament identifiables avec certitude et devenus traditionnels dans la liturgie : les deux cantiques de Moïse, le cantique d'Anne, les prières d'Isaïe, d'Habacuc et de Jonas et le cantique des trois enfants.<sup>11</sup> Un de ces textes en particulier, le cantique de Moïse de Deutéronome 32,<sup>12</sup> est cité aussi dans la lettre 53 de Jérôme (adressée à Paulin de Nole et écrite pour éclaircir le sens préfiguratif de l'Ancien Testament), où peu après l'auteur qualifie le livre de Job de prosimètre, avec une partie en prose et un noyau en poésie.<sup>13</sup> En somme, les réflexions que le Père de l'Eglise énonce dans ces lettres doivent être connues d'Arator : il semblerait, en effet, que celui-ci, en voulant rappeler des extraits des Écritures en poésie, choisisse ceux qui avaient déjà été mentionnés par Jérôme dans ces lettres. Cependant, dans la première le traducteur de la Bible spécifie le type de vers par une terminologie classique, tandis que dans la seconde lettre il ne le fait pas : pourquoi, donc, Arator parle-t-il de vers hexamètres pour le Cantique et le livre de Job ?

Nous trouvons une réponse dans un autre passage assez connu de Jérôme, à savoir la préface de la *Chronique*, écrite autour de 380, dans laquelle nous pouvons lire :<sup>14</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Morard 2007, p. 396 : il s'agit donc de Exod 15. 1–18 et Deut 32 ; 1 Reg 2. 1–10 ; Is 26. 9–20 ; Hab 3. 2–19 ; Ion 2. 3–10 ; Deut 3. 57–88. Nicéas fait aussi allusion à deux passages néotestamentaires, à savoir le *Magnificat* (Luc 1. 46–55) et le *Benedictus* (Luc 1. 68–79). Pour une liste des cantiques de l'Ancien Testament cf. aussi le travail de Brésard 1989, qui s'occupe des sept cantiques nommés par Origène à la fin du prologue du commentaire au Cantique des Cantiques et de l'influence de l'Alexandrin sur les auteurs successifs, parmi lesquels Jérôme. Je remercie Nicoletta Brocca pour ces références bibliographiques.

<sup>12</sup> Deut 32. 7 *Memento dierum antiquorum, cogita generationes singulas ; interroga patrem tuum, et annuntiabit tibi, maiores tuos, et dicent tibi*. Cf. Hier. *epist.* 53. 3 *Et in Deuteronomio legimus : interroga patrem tuum et annuntiabit tibi, presbyteros tuos et dicent tibi*.

<sup>13</sup> Hier. *epist.* 53. 8 *Iob, exemplar patientiae, quae non mysteria suo sermone complectitur ? Prosa incipit, versu labitur, pedestri sermone finitur*.

<sup>14</sup> PL XXVII, coll. 223–224.

Denique quid Psalterio canorius, quod in morem nostri Flacci et Graeci Pindari nunc iambo currit, nunc alcaico personat, nunc Sapphico tumet, nunc semipede ingreditur? Quid Deuteronomii et Isaiae Cantico pulchrius, quid Salomone gravius, quid perfectius Iob? Quae omnia hexametris et pentametris versibus, ut Iosephus et Origenes scribunt, apud suos composita decurrunt. Haec cum Graece legimus, aliud quiddam sonant; cum Latine, penitus non haerent.

Dans ces lignes Jérôme associe clairement la mélodie des Psaumes aux mètres lyriques, en les comparant aux vers de Pindare et d'Horace, aux iambes, aux strophes alcaïques et sapphiques, aux semipieds.<sup>15</sup> En outre, il cite ensemble le cantique du Deutéronome et celui d'Isaïe<sup>16</sup> (ce qui est intéressant, car cela nous permet de garder une sorte d'ambiguïté à propos du terme *cantica*) et il parle de la *gravitas* de Salomon et de la perfection de Job. Tous ces textes – il cite encore Josèphe et Origène, qui toutefois mentionne des tétramètres à la place des pentamètres – circulaient chez les Juifs en hexamètres ou pentamètres, tandis que, si on les lit en traduction grecque ou latine, ils ont une sonorité différente.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Cf. aussi Hier. *epist.* 53. 8 *David, Simonides noster, Pindarus et Alcaeus, Flaccus quoque, Catullus et Serenus, Christum lyra personat et in decacordo psalterio ab inferis excitat resurgentem*. D'après Hilhorst 2003, p. 321, 'David est l'égal de trois poètes grecs et trois poètes latins à la fois, avec l'implication qu'il se sert de leurs mesures'.

<sup>16</sup> Il s'agit, selon Hilhorst 2003, p. 316, d'Is 5. 1–7 ou d'Is 26. 9–20 : tous les deux, en effet, font partie des Cantiques de l'Église latine.

<sup>17</sup> Ces lignes expliquent d'où Arator emprunte très probablement la notion selon laquelle les Cantiques et le livre de Job étaient écrits en hexamètres, mais nous oblige aussi à examiner encore le mot *cantica*. Dans l'extrait d'Arator, nous pourrions reconnaître facilement le cantique de Moïse de Deutéronome 32 ou les prophéties d'Isaïe, qui sont cités ensemble dans la préface de Jérôme. Toutefois, à mon avis, nous ne pouvons exclure non plus le Cantique des Cantiques. La tradition, en effet, attribue sa composition à Salomon : Grégoire de Nazianze – comme le rappelle Hilhorst 2003, p. 312 – parle par exemple de cinq livres entièrement écrits en poésie, parmi lesquels trois sont de Salomon, à savoir l'*Ecclesiaste*, les *Proverbes* et le *Cantique des Cantiques* ; ce dernier est le seul d'entre eux qui pourrait être appelé *canticum*. Or, Salomon est nommé ici dans l'avant-dernière proposition interrogative et est évoqué par Jérôme même dans l'*epist.* 53. 8, déjà citée, où le Père affirme que *mores corrigit, naturam docet, Ecclesiam iungit et Christum sanctarumque nuptiarum dulce canit ἐπιθάλμιον*. Donc, il ne paraîtrait pas improbable de supposer que cet épithalame en mètres dactyliques soit le Cantique des Cantiques ; d'où l'impossibilité d'établir *a priori* à quel *canticum* Arator pense dans la lettre à Vigile.

Jérôme cite des exemples identiques de mètres en hébreu même dans la préface au livre de Job, écrite dix ans après la traduction du *Chronicon*, en soulignant qu'il s'agit d'un prosimètre qui alterne de la prose, des hexamètres et d'autres pieds *non earundem syllabarum, sed eorundem temporum*<sup>18</sup>; en outre, il exhorte ceux qui ne reconnaissent pas dans cette langue des schémas métriques à lire l'ouvrage d'importantes *auctoritates*:

Quod si cui videretur incredulum metra scilicet esse apud Hebraeos et in more nostri Flacci Graecique Pindari et Alcaei et Sapphus vel Psalterium vel Lamentationes Ieremiae uel omnia ferme Scripturarum cantica comprehendendi, legat Philonem, Iosephum, Origenem, Caesariensem Eusebium.

Dans la préface au *Chronicon* les noms d'Origène et de Flavius Josèphe sont cités dans une incise, tandis qu'ici ils sont mis en relief, près de Philon et d'Eusèbe de Césarée. Philon, en fait, dans la *Vie de Moïse* affirme que le prophète avait appris la théorie du rythme et de la métrique des Égyptiens, mais n'ajoute rien d'autre;<sup>19</sup> et dans la *Vie contemplative* il parle tout simplement de moines juifs appelés Thérapeutes, qui composent des hymnes pour Dieu en plusieurs mètres et tonalités, utilisant parfois des strophes et des antistrophes.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Hier. praef. Vulg. Iob: *A principio itaque voluminis usque ad verba Iob apud Hebraeos prosa oratio est. Porro a verbis Iob in quibus ait: 'Pereat dies in qua natus sum et nox in qua dictum est: Conceptus est homo' usque ad eum locum, ubi ante finem voluminis scriptum est: 'Idcirco ipse me reprehendo et ago paenitentiam in favilla et cinere', exametri versus sunt, dactilo spondeoque currentes et propter linguae idioma crebro recipientes et alios pedes non earundem syllabarum, sed eorundem temporum. Interdum quoque rithmus ipse dulcis et tinnulus fertur numeris lege solutis, quod metrici magis quam simplex lector intellegunt. A supradicto autem versu usque ad finem libri paruum comma quod remanet prosa oratione contextitur.* Sur ce passage cf. Hilhorst 2003, p. 317, et sa bibliographie.

<sup>19</sup> Philo Mos. 1. 23 Ἀριθμούς μὲν οὖν καὶ γεωμετρίαν τὴν τε ρυθμικὴν καὶ ἀρμονικὴν καὶ μετρικὴν θεωρίαν καὶ μουσικὴν τὴν σύμπασαν διὰ τε χρήσεως ὀργάνων καὶ λόγων τῶν ἐν ταῖς τέχναις καὶ διεξόδοις τοπικωτέραις Αἰγυπτίων οἱ λόγιοι παρεδίδσαν.

<sup>20</sup> Philo contempl. 80 Καὶ ἔπειτα ὁ μὲν ἀναστάς ὕμνον ἄδει πεποιημένον εἰς τὸν θεόν, ἢ καινὸν αὐτὸς πεποιηκώς ἢ ἀρχαῖον τινα τῶν πάλαι ποιητῶν – μέτρα γὰρ καὶ μέλη καταλελοίπασιν πολλὰ ἑπτῶν, τριμέτρων, προσοδίων ὕμνων, παρασπονδείων, παραβωμίων, στασίμων χορικῶν στροφαῖς πολυστρόφοις εὖ διαμεμετρημένων. Cf. aussi contempl. 84 Εἴτα ἄδουσι πεποιημένους ὕμνους εἰς τὸν θεόν πολλοῖς μέτροις καὶ μέλεσι, τῇ μὲν συνηχοῦντες, τῇ δὲ καὶ ἀντιφώνοις ἀρμονίαις ἐπιχειρονομοῦντες καὶ ἐπορχοῦμενοι, καὶ ἐπιθειάζοντες τότε μὲν τὰ προσόδια, τότε δὲ τὰ στάσιμα, στροφάς τε τὰς ἐν χορείᾳ καὶ ἀντιστροφάς ποιοῦμενοι.

Flavius Josèphe fournit quelques détails supplémentaires : dans les *Antiquités juives*, il voit en Moïse l’auteur d’une hymne à Dieu en hexamètres, très probablement celle entonnée après la traversée de la Mer Rouge, et de prophéties contenues dans un poème avec ce schéma métrique, déclamées par lui-même à la fin de sa vie ; plus tard, en décrivant les instruments musicaux de David, il rappelle que celui-ci avait écrit des chants et des hymnes en trimètres et pentamètres<sup>21</sup> : ‘évidemment – affirme A. Hilhorst<sup>22</sup> – ce sont les Psaumes qui sont visés ici’.

Origène aussi, dans une scholie au premier verset du Psaume 118, affirme que les vers hébreux sont en métrique – le cantique du Deutéronome est en hexamètres, les Psaumes en trimètres ou tétramètres – mais il est conscient de la différence entre les systèmes grec et hébreu.<sup>23</sup>

Des textes hébreux en métrique sont aussi nommés explicitement par Eusèbe dans la *Préparation évangélique* :<sup>24</sup>

Εἶεν δ’ ἂν αὐτοῖς καὶ ἔμμετροι ποιήσεις, ὡς ἡ μεγάλη Μωσέως ᾠδὴ καὶ τοῦ Δαβὶδ ὁ ρηΐ Ψαλμός, τῷ καλουμένῳ παρ’ Ἑλλήσιν ἡρώω μέτρῳ συντεταγμένοι. Φασὶ γοῦν ἑξάμετρα εἶναι ταῦτα, δι’ ἑκκαίδεκα συλλαβῶν πεποιημένα. Καὶ τὰ λοιπὰ δὲ τὰ παρ’ αὐτοῖς στιχῆρη δι’ ἐπῶν λέγεται τριμέτρων τε καὶ τετραμέτρων κατὰ τὴν οἰκείαν αὐτῶν συγκεῖσθαι φωνήν.

L’auteur ne semble pas avoir une connaissance directe de ce qu’il affirme : sa prudence, en effet, apparaît dès le début grâce à l’expression εἶεν δ’ ἂν αὐτοῖς et l’usage du verbe “dire” à la

<sup>21</sup> Ios. Fl. *AJ* II. 346 Μωσῆς ᾠδὴν εἰς τὸν θεὸν ἐγκώμιόν τε καὶ τῆς εὐμενείας εὐχαριστίαν περιέχουσαν ἐν ἑξαμέτρῳ τόνῳ συντίθησιν ; IV. 303 Ἐπειτα ποιήσιν ἑξάμετρον αὐτοῖς ἀνέγνω, ἣν καὶ καταλέλοιπεν ἐν βίβλῳ ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ πρόρρησιν περιέχουσαν τῶν ἐσομένων ; VII. 305 Ἀπηλλαγμένος δ’ ἤδη πολέμων ὁ Δαυίδης καὶ κινδύνων καὶ βαθείας ἀπολαύων τὸ λοιπὸν εἰρήνης ᾠδὰς εἰς τὸν θεὸν καὶ ὕμνους συνετάξατο μέτρου ποικίλου. τοὺς μὲν γὰρ τριμέτρους, τοὺς δὲ πενταμέτρους ἐποίησεν.

<sup>22</sup> Hilhorst 2003, p. 308. Nous devons beaucoup à Hilhorst, surtout pour ce qui concerne les témoignages grecs de pp. 306-314.

<sup>23</sup> Orig. *schol. ps. 118* (Harl 1972) Οἱ γὰρ παρ’ Ἑβραίοις στίχοι, ὡς ἔλεγε τις, ἔμμετροί εἰσιν, οἱ ἑξαμέτρῳ μὲν, ἡ ἐν τῷ Δευτερονομίῳ ᾠδὴ. ἐν τριμέτρῳ δὲ καὶ τετραμέτρῳ, οἱ ψαλμοί. Οἱ στίχοι οὖν οἱ παρ’ Ἑβραίοις ἕτεροί εἰσιν παρὰ τοὺς παρ’ ἡμῖν. Cf. Döllner 1899, p. 23 et Hilhorst 2003, p. 310 : ils soulignent la différence, à propos des Psaumes, entre Flavius Josèphe, qui parle de trimètre et pentamètre, et Origène, qui cite des trimètres et tétramètres.

<sup>24</sup> Eus. *PE* XI. 5. 7.



troisième personne, moyen par lequel il indique citer la pensée d'autrui. Nous ne savons pas d'où vient la constatation que les hexamètres en hébreu étaient formés par seize syllabes :<sup>25</sup> cela, en outre, s'opposerait à la prétention de considérer les deux systèmes métriques comme étant homogènes, chose que l'auteur en personne sait très bien, lors qu'en parlant de trimètres et tétramètres il spécifie *κατὰ τὴν οἰκείαν αὐτῶν [...] φωνήν*.<sup>26</sup>

Quant aux auteurs latins qui ont vécu après Jérôme, ils dépendent tous de lui et de ses sources grecques.<sup>27</sup>

Dans ce cas, comme pour la plupart des interprétations typologiques de l'*Historia apostolica*, Arator n'est pas complètement original, mais au contraire dépend des Pères de l'Église qui lui ont fourni la clé de lecture dont il s'est servi pour comprendre le Texte sacré et, ensuite, l'élaborer de nouveau, non seulement d'un point de vue artistique, mais aussi d'un point de vue allégorique. Parmi ces auteurs, il faut citer sans aucun doute Jérôme, qui – comme l'ont très bien montré Hillier, Deproost et Schwindt<sup>28</sup> – est une des sources, avec Hilaire et Augustin, des parties exégétiques du poème d'Arator.

Cela ne signifie pas que tout ce qu'on lit dans l'ouvrage de Jérôme est original : souvent, par exemple, il repère des indications ailleurs ; c'est ainsi que Philon, Flavius Josèphe, Origène et Eusèbe ont survécu, grâce à la médiation hiéronymienne, dans l'œuvre d'Arator. On ne peut pas exclure non plus que notre poète connaisse les travaux de ces deux derniers auteurs,<sup>29</sup> peut-être par les traductions de Rufin. Il est donc probable qu'Arator pense à cette partie de la tradition qu'il connaît, lors qu'il affirme

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Baroway 1935, p. 74 : 'Eusebius' authority for the sixteen syllables is purely speculative. It was neither Josephus nor Origen, and it could hardly have been his Jewish contemporaries. Possibly the notion is his own'. On pourrait aussi penser qu'il s'agit d'une mesure moyenne ou d'une des plus communes, comme pour un hexamètre grec.

<sup>26</sup> La présence de mètres différents dans la Bible est traitée même par d'autres auteurs grecs, tels Julien, Grégoire de Nazianze, Adrien et Cosmas Indicopleustes (voir Hilhorst 2003, pp. 311-314). Toutefois, il est très difficile de penser que Julien et Grégoire peuvent être une des sources de Jérôme, auquel Arator s'inspire : c'est pour cette raison que je ne les étudie pas dans ces pages.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Hilhorst 2003, pp. 321-327 pour ce qui concerne Augustin, Cassiodore, Isidore de Séville, Bède, Boniface.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Deproost 1990, Schwindt 1990 et 1995a.

<sup>29</sup> À propos d'Origène et sa réception en Occident cf. Schwind 1995b.

que *metrica vis non est incognita libris* (v. 23), plutôt que de faire référence – comme le croyait P. Riché<sup>30</sup> – à *Sedul. carm. pasch.* i. 23 et à l'expression *Daviticis assuetus cantibus odas*.<sup>31</sup> On trouve, en revanche, cette sorte d'hommage à Sédulius dans une autre lettre d'Arator, celle qu'il adresse à son ami Parthenius, où il parle de soi-même en tant que *Daviticis assuetus floribus odas*.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Riché 1962, p. 130 nn. 72-73.

<sup>31</sup> *Sedul. carm. pasch.* i. 23-26 *Cur ego, Daviticis assuetus cantibus odas / cordarum resonare decem sanctoque verenter / stare choro et placidis caelestia psallere verbis / clara salutiferi taceam miracula Christi?*

<sup>32</sup> Le lien entre ces deux passages a été déjà établi par Châtillon 1965, p. 46. Cf. *ad Parth.* 69-77 *Namque ego, Romanae caulis permixtus amoenis / Ecclesiae, tonso vertice factus ovis, / pascua laeta videns et aprica volumina Christi / quaerebam gustu tangere cuncta meo / et nunc Daviticis assuetus floribus odas / mandere, nunc Genesim mens cupiebat edax. / Cumque simul violas et lilia carpere mallet / quae vetus atque novus congeminauit odor, / incidit ille mihi, quem regula nominat Actus.*

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### *Abstract*

In many manuscripts, Arator's *Historia Apostolica* is opened with a letter written in elegiac couplets and addressed to Pope Vigilius. After praising the pope, the poet refers to the subject of his work – the *labores* of the apostles – and explains that these true events should be read in both a literal and an allegorical sense. He then justifies the use of the poetic form as an imitation of some books of the Old Testament, partly composed in verses. The poet lists these books, which were originally written in Hebrew (the Psalms, the Lamentations of Jeremiah, the Canticles, Job), and the metre used for each of them, using classical terminology. Jerome is likely the source enabling Arator to recognize in these biblical texts metres that can be assimilated to classical ones. Jerome mentions these writings in *epist.* 30 to Paula, in *epist.* 53 to Paulinus of Nola, and in the prefaces to the *Chronicon* and the book of Job. Here, he explicitly quotes the *auctoritates* that he follows: Philo of Alexandria, Flavius Josephus, Origen and Eusebius. As is the case for most of the scriptural interpretations he presents in his poem, here Arator is heavily dependent on those Fathers who provided him with the key to understanding the Bible.

LE RENOUVELLEMENT FORMEL  
DE LA POÉSIE ÉLÉGIAQUE  
DANS LA LITTÉRATURE  
LATINE CHRÉTIENNE  
(fin IV<sup>e</sup>-moitié V<sup>e</sup> s.)

1. *Préambule*

Avant tout, je veux préciser l'horizon chronologique dont je m'occuperai dans cette relation : je veux me concentrer sur la littérature latine chrétienne de fin IV<sup>e</sup> – première moitié V<sup>e</sup> siècle, parce que cette production peut être correctement définie par son contenu éminemment chrétien, alors que les poètes postérieurs, par exemple Luxorius, Sidoine Apollinaire et Ennode, partagent des perspectives bien différentes. Nous allons considérer, donc, les œuvres suivantes :

- les deux seules compositions de Prudence en distiques élégiaques sont la pièce 8 et la pièce 11, comprises toutes les deux dans le *Peristephanon*, qui chante le triomphe des martyrs ;<sup>1</sup>
- parmi les œuvres de Paulin de Nole, si l'on excepte les premiers dix-huit vers qui font fonction d'introduction au *carmen* 10 – un poème épistolaire adressé par Paulin à son ancien maître Ausone caractérisé par la polymétrie,<sup>2</sup> conformément à une praxis de certaine production épistolaire de celui-ci<sup>3</sup> –, et si l'on excepte les vv. 272–343 du *carmen* 21, composé par Paulin lui-même dans des mètres différents, les œuvres qui peuvent être reconduites à l'univers élégiaque sont les *tituli* destinés à l'église de Fondi, en Campanie, et surtout ceux envoyés par Paulin à Sulpice Sévère qui les avait sollicités, en tant que signe d'amitié chrétienne, pour

<sup>1</sup> Charlet 1993, pp. 135–166.

<sup>2</sup> Ce poème est en distiques élégiaques, distiques iambiques et hexamètres : voir Filosini 2008.

<sup>3</sup> Voir Consolino 2003b, en particulier pp. 165–166.

être gravés dans l'église de Primuliacum (Prémillac), *tituli* qui nous sont parvenus par Paulin même dans son épître 32;<sup>4</sup> l'épithalame, c'est-à-dire le *carmen* 25, composé par Paulin probablement entre 400 et 404 pour le mariage de Julien, futur évêque d'Eclane, et Titia;<sup>5</sup> l'épître protreptique adressée en 396 à Licentius, fils du riche Romanianus, ami d'Augustin d'Hippone, qui constitue une partie de l'épître 8 de sa correspondance, l'un des premiers poèmes composés par Paulin, peu après son établissement à Nole auprès du sanctuaire de saint Félix;<sup>6</sup> enfin le *carmen* 31, une consolation adressée, très probablement elle-même au début de son activité poétique,<sup>7</sup> à ses amis Pneumatius et Fidélis à l'occasion de la mort de leur petit enfant Celse;<sup>8</sup>

- c'est en distiques élégiaques aussi une partie très remarquable de la production poétique du milieu gaulois du v<sup>e</sup> s., dont les textes les plus importants sont le poème en deux livres et 518 distiques élégiaques, intitulé *Commonitorium* par Martino Delrio,<sup>9</sup> son premier éditeur, composé par Orientius, futur évêque d'Auch, très probablement dans la première décennie du v<sup>e</sup> s. dans la Gaule ravagée par les premières invasions barbares; l'hymne anonyme en distiques élégiaques *Sancte deus, lucis lumen, concordia rerum*;<sup>10</sup> l'*Ad coniugem*, protreptique en 53 distiques précédés par 16 vers anacréontiques, attribué à Prosper d'Aquitaine;<sup>11</sup> le *Liber epigrammatum*, un recueil de 106 épigrammes en distiques,<sup>12</sup> ainsi que deux *Epigrammata in obtrectatorem Augustini* et un *Epitaphium Nestorianae et pelagianae hereseon*, tous de Prosper d'Aquitaine;<sup>13</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Piscitelli Carpino 2002, pp. 109-163; Guttilla 2004, pp. 389-408; Lehmann 2004. Ces *tituli* rentrent dans un projet édilitaire de Paulin illustré par lui-même dans les poèmes 27-28 : voir Herbert de la Portbarré-Viard 2006.

<sup>5</sup> Sur ce poème, voir Piscitelli Carpino 1993, pp. 118-127; Consolino 1997, pp. 199-213; Horstmann 2004.

<sup>6</sup> Cutino 2004, pp. 329-348.

<sup>7</sup> Guttilla 1989, pp. 58-69 place cette composition dans les années 393-396.

<sup>8</sup> Costanza 1972, pp. 346-353; Quacquarelli 1983, pp. 121-142; Guttilla 1987, pp. 69-97; Guttilla 2004, pp. 51-90.

<sup>9</sup> Le poème dans les manuscrits qui le transmettent, est appelé de façon générique *Versus sancti Orientii* : son premier éditeur, Martino Delrio l'appela *Commonitorium* sur la base d'une indication trouvée dans le *De scriptoribus ecclesiasticis*, chap. 34 de Sigébert de Gémbloix. Sur ce poème voir Bianco 1987, pp. 33-68; Cutino 2006, pp. 315-331; Gasti 2007-2008, pp. 131-144.

<sup>10</sup> Bianco 1990; Müller 2007, pp. 211-227.

<sup>11</sup> Cutino 2006, pp. 331-345; Santelia 2009.

<sup>12</sup> Cutino 2009, pp. 190-206.

<sup>13</sup> Cutino 2012b, pp. 307-341.

- à cette production il faut ajouter enfin d'une part les élégies-préfaces de deux poèmes apologético-didactiques, c'est-à-dire le *De providentia Dei*, un poème de 416/417 attribué faussement à Prosper<sup>14</sup> et le *De ingratis*, œuvre authentique de celui-ci,<sup>15</sup> d'autre part un autre hymne attribué à Sedulius, en 55 distiques à la structure épanaleptique, mieux connu avec le titre de *Collatio Veteris et Novi Testamenti*.<sup>16</sup>

Le point de départ indiscutable pour traiter notre thème réside dans les Actes du Colloque international dédié en 1992 à la poésie chrétienne latine en distiques élégiaques,<sup>17</sup> colloque qui, en profitant au mieux de la présence de nombreux spécialistes de l'Antiquité tardive, a fait la lumière sur les aspects variés d'une production poétique qui, bien qu'elle ne puisse être rapprochée ni sur le plan quantitatif, ni sur celui de l'originalité formelle, du grand sillon de la poésie biblique généralement en hexamètres, n'en reste cependant pas moins du plus grand intérêt historique et littéraire.

Or, les résultats de ce colloque semblent significatifs surtout en ce qui concerne le rapport entre la production élégiaque des poètes chrétiens, avant tout Paulin de Nole et Prudence, et leurs modèles classiques, mais le colloque n'a pas donné de réponses suffisantes à plusieurs questions :

- avant tout, la production élégiaque du milieu gaulois de la première moitié du v<sup>e</sup> s. n'a pas été suffisamment caractérisée du point de vue littéraire ;
- il manque encore une histoire évolutive, diachronique du développement de la production élégiaque chrétienne qui puisse pleinement rendre compte des modifications apportées aux différentes typologies textuelles sous la poussée du renouvellement profond des contenus ;
- il manque encore une considération attentive du contexte socio-historique dans lequel cette production a mûri et de ses éventuels destinataires/bénéficiaires ;
- enfin, l'étude de l'évolution des formes textuelles devrait être reliée à une étude attentive même des choix métriques : à cet égard,

<sup>14</sup> Cutino 2011.

<sup>15</sup> Cutino 2015.

<sup>16</sup> Voir Corsaro 2000, pp. 83-95.

<sup>17</sup> Catanzaro – Santucci 1992.

on peut remarquer que si nous avons au moins des échantillons significatifs pour les poètes ‘majeurs’ tels que Ausone, Paulin et Prudence,<sup>18</sup> nous n’avons pas du tout de données métriques pour la poésie gauloise du v<sup>e</sup> s.

Dans cet exposé, je chercherai à apporter une réponse cohérente à toutes ces questions même si elle reste partielle : j’ai l’intention, en effet, de m’occuper prochainement des tendances métriques connexes à cette production élégiaque afin de montrer comment ces tendances sont l’équivalent métrique des tendances formelles et stylistiques que nous allons étudier ici de près.

## 2. *La poésie élégiaque dans le ‘mélange des genres’ du Peristephanon de Prudence*

Examinons les textes susdits dans leur succession chronologique et par rapport aux genres littéraires dans lesquels ils prennent place, à partir de ceux de Prudence et de Paulin de Nole. Prudence place dans le cadre original des louanges des martyrs du *Peristhephanon*, dans un cadre, donc, proche des modalités des hymnes lyriques, deux compositions, la 8 et la 11, les seules en distiques élégiaques, qui n’ont pas une véritable configuration hymnodique et pour cela ne sont jamais qualifiés en tant que hymnes : la pièce 11 est définie dans les manuscrits *passio*, tandis que la pièce 8 n’est pas du tout caractérisée mais elle rentre clairement – comme l’ont souligné les critiques modernes – dans la production épigrammatique, en particulier dans la typologie épigraphique des *tituli*. En ce qui concerne la pièce 11 consacrée au martyr d’Hyppolite, Jean-Louis Charlet<sup>19</sup> dans sa contribution publiée dans les actes du colloque déjà cité par nous, a bien montré comment, en dépit de sa situation, cette composition adressée à Valérien, évêque de Calahorra, a pour but d’informer celui-ci sur le martyr même : dans la ligne, donc, des précédents – Properce surtout avec l’élégie iv. 3 et Ovide avec ses *Héroïdes*

<sup>18</sup> Pour les données métriques, voir Martina Sáez 2003, pp. 648-663. Une fine analyse des tendances métriques de la ligne Ausone-Paulin de Nole-Prudence se trouve toujours chez Charlet 1980, en particulier pp. 101-102 et les notes pp. 251-252.

<sup>19</sup> Charlet 1993, pp. 143-166.



et ses *Pontiques* – et des contemporains – Ausone,<sup>20</sup> Claudien<sup>21</sup> et Paulin même – illustres, la pièce 11 est une véritable épître poétique en distiques, dont la partie narrative trouve plusieurs correspondances dans les *Fastes* d'Ovide, auxquels, par ailleurs, comme l'a souligné Anne-Marie Palmer,<sup>22</sup> elle se rattache pour la finalité étiologique – illustrer l'origine d'un culte hagiographique – qui préside aussi au poème de l'auteur classique, qui veut expliquer les fêtes et les rites de la religion romaine. Quant à la pièce 8, à travers l'emploi du distique élégiaque pour ce tristique, comme je l'ai montré dans un travail récent sur l'évolution de l'épigramme chrétienne,<sup>23</sup> Prudence se rattache à la tendance propre aux auteurs chrétiens des *tituli*, inaugurée par Ambroise de Milan, à employer ce mètre par rapport aux épigrammes de Damase, dont les pièces épigraphiques, même s'il y en a aussi trois en distiques (4, 33 et 58 Ferrua), sont pour la plupart en hexamètres : il s'agit d'un véritable retour aux sources de l'épigramme et à sa destination originale éminemment épigraphique,<sup>24</sup> tandis que l'hexamètre est constamment utilisé, chez ces auteurs mêmes, pour les *tituli* bibliques,<sup>25</sup> ce qui dépend très probablement de l'influence de la poésie biblique.<sup>26</sup> En particulier, j'ai remarqué comment dans la pièce 8, un tristique épigraphe destiné à être gravé sur un baptistère à Calahorra

<sup>20</sup> Presque un tiers des lettres d'Ausone sont écrites en distiques élégiaques : sur cette production épistolaire voir Mondin 1990, pp. 107-149.

<sup>21</sup> Sur les 'lettres élégiaques' de Claudien, voir Ricci 1989, en particulier pp. 292-300.

<sup>22</sup> Palmer 1989, p. 255 ss.

<sup>23</sup> Cutino 2013.

<sup>24</sup> Comme l'observe encore Isidore de Séville dans ses *Etymologies* (I. 39. 22) : *Epigramma est titulus, quod in Latinum superscriptio interpretatur* (voir Bernt 1968, p. 189).

<sup>25</sup> Nous avons, dans l'ordre, les distiques hexamétriques attribués par la tradition à Ambroise, qui illustrent certaines fresques d'argument vétéro- et néotestamentaire (sur lesquels voir Visonà 2008, pp. 51-107), le *Dittochaon* de Prudence (Pillinger 1980) et les *Historiae Veteris et Novi Testamenti* d'Elpidius Rusticus (sur cet auteur, médecin du roi Théodoric – première moitié du VI<sup>e</sup> siècle –, voir Corsaro 1955), respectivement écrits en quatrains et tristiques hexamétriques à la même fonction.

<sup>26</sup> On pourrait bien penser que cette spécialisation dépend du modèle de l'épopée biblique, où l'Écriture est paraphrasée normalement *heroico metro* : en effet, Quacquarelli 1986, p. 168 définit justement ces compositions comme 'una particolare parafrasi biblica a carattere popolare'.

en l'honneur des martyrs militaires locaux Emeterius et Chelidonius, Prudence fusionne deux modèles ambrosiens, celui de la célébration du martyr en tant que signe de la *gloria Christi* à travers l'interprétation symbolique de l'espace où est placé son mémorial, et celui de la théologie baptismale liée au baptistère.

### 3. *Les élégies de Paulin de Nole entre tradition et innovation*

Par rapport à Prudence, l'approche paulinienne de la poésie élégiaque apparaît plus féconde et plus originale. Avant tout, il faut observer que, avec les *tituli* transmis par l'épître 32 qui furent composés par Paulin pour les basiliques de Prémillac (*Primuliacum*) en Aquitaine et de Fondi en Campanie, Paulin accomplit l'approfondissement stylistique et théologique-liturgique des perspectives des épitaphes de Damase poursuivi par Ambroise et Prudence. En effet, à cet approfondissement théologique et liturgique, ses pièces ajoutent aussi un élément absent dans les poèmes précédents, en l'occurrence la célébration du commanditaire des *tituli*, Sulpice Sévère, en lui appliquant tous les clichés de la glorification damasienne des martyrs : c'est pourquoi, l'*auctor* de ces initiatives édilitaires, qui magnifient la *gloria Dei*, est assimilé à l'idéal du martyr qui a suivi le modèle du Christ.<sup>27</sup> Ainsi, l'épigramme célébrative des œuvres édilitaires de Paulin devient une véritable louange du commanditaire, et la concentration expressive qui caractérise normalement les *tituli*, de Damase à Ambroise et à Prudence est diluée dans plusieurs *epigrammata longa*<sup>28</sup> – des pièces dont la longueur ne tient pas seulement au nombre de vers, mais aussi au style.<sup>29</sup> Par ailleurs, l'*argutia* d'ordinaire requise de l'épigramme, en raison de laquelle chez les auteurs chrétiens, comme l'a bien souligné Pierre Laurens,<sup>30</sup> ce genre de composition fut longtemps regardé

<sup>27</sup> Voir Cutino 2013.

<sup>28</sup> Sur cette typologie d'épigrammes qui semble contredire à la brièveté constitutive de l'épigramme, je renvoie aux mélanges d'études Morelli 2008.

<sup>29</sup> Les pièces les plus longues sont *tit.* 2 (16 vv.), *tit.* 4 (24 v.), *tit.* 7 (28 vv.), *tit.* 8 (18 vv.), toutes en distiques élégiaques, et, ce qui est très significatif, toutes destinées à la basilique de Prémillac fondée par Sulpice Sévère.

<sup>30</sup> Laurens 1989, pp. 467-468.

‘d’abord comme attentatoire à la simplicité, au sérieux du récit évangélique’, devient une caractéristique significative des *tituli*. Avec les pièces pauliniennes, le genre du *titulus* parvient au bout de sa fonction et de ses ressources :<sup>31</sup> ce n’est pas un hasard si, ensuite, nous trouvons des poèmes où, pour ainsi dire, se dissipe la *brevitas* recherchée par ce genre de compositions.<sup>32</sup>

Quant au genre épistolaire, le poème en distiques qui accompagne, selon une praxis commune à cette époque, l’épître 8 en prose adressée à Licentius, s’inscrit parfaitement dans le genre de l’épître poétique élégiaque et dans les finalités propres à cette typologie textuelle qui en promeuvent la diffusion par imprégnation chez les poètes de l’Antiquité Tardive pour cultiver leurs entretiens avec les contemporains, en donnant, comme l’a bien remarqué Jean-Paul Boucher,<sup>33</sup> la possibilité de parler en son propre nom des choses ainsi que des êtres avec un destinataire, et, donc, de transférer cette expression personnelle en un dialogue. Sur le plan des contenus, cependant, il y a dans cette pièce paulinienne une innovation importante qui comporte un élargissement de ses fonctions : le dialogue devient un véritable protreptique à la conversion en vers, là où pour composer son protreptique poétique Ausone avait employé l’hexamètre.<sup>34</sup>

Mais c’est surtout le long *carmen* 31 en 316 distiques qui présente des éléments nouveaux très intéressants. Si cette composition s’inscrit parfaitement dans le sillon de la consolation poétique et pour le mètre élégiaque (il suffit de mentionner l’élégie ovidienne *ex Ponto* iv. 11, un billet de condoléances envoyé à un ami, et la *Consolatio ad Liviam*) et pour la présence dans l’incipit (vv. 1-50) et dans la fin (vv. 551-632), selon les modalités de la *Ringkomposition*, des topoi propres au *paramythē-*

<sup>31</sup> Pour quelques unes de ces épigrammes, comme le *titulus* 7, de 28 vers, on doute qu’elles aient été effectivement gravées : Lehmann 2004, p. 157 n. 128.

<sup>32</sup> Il me plaît de citer au moins le *titulus* composé par Sidoine Apollinaire à la demande de Perpetuus, évêque de Tours, pour célébrer saint Martin : dans cette longue épigraphe – Sidoine lui-même la qualifie d’*elegia* (*epist.* iv. 18. 5) –, sur laquelle on peut voir Zarini 2002, en particulier pp. 253-262, l’éloge du saint cède le pas à la louange du commanditaire Perpetuus, qui occupe la majeure partie du poème, à travers des procédés rhétoriques et plusieurs jeux de mots.

<sup>33</sup> Boucher 1980, p. 210.

<sup>34</sup> Cutino 2004, pp. 329-348.

*tikós lógos*,<sup>35</sup> cependant l'essentiel de la composition, la partie centrale (vv. 51-550), comme l'a déjà souligné Salvatore Costanza,<sup>36</sup> consiste dans une section catéchétique. Dans cette section nous ne trouvons pas seulement la valorisation de la perspective de la résurrection dévoilée par le Christ et des peines infernales qui attendent l'impie,<sup>37</sup> des éléments topiques de la version chrétienne du genre consolatoire en prose, mais Paulin s'adresse aussi aux destinataires du poème, les parents du petit Celse, Pneumatius et Fidélis, pour les exhorter à suivre la véritable voie chrétienne basée sur la charité et sur l'attention particulière envers les pauvres : la *consolatio* devient ainsi elle-même un véritable protreptique à la vie chrétienne en fournissant un modèle idéal, la recherche de la vie parfaite dans le christianisme embrassée par le poète même (v. 451 ss.), qui seul peut assurer le salut de l'homme.

Enfin, l'épithalame composé pour le mariage de Julien, le *carmen* 25, est lui-même très original, avant tout pour l'utilisation du distique élégiaque : en effet nous trouvons employé toujours pour cette typologie textuelle l'hexamètre et par les précédents classiques – je me réfère à l'épithalame épique de Catulle, le *carmen* 64 de son *Libellus*, et à l'épithalame adressé par Stace à Stella et Violentilla – et par les contemporains – en hexamètres sont l'épithalame de Claudien pour Honorius (en 391) et celui pour Palladius et Celerina (en 399) – et encore par les succédanés – sont en hexamètres l'épithalame de Sidoine Apollinaire pour Ruricius et Ibéria et celui de Venance Fortunat pour le roi Sigébert et son épouse Brunichilde. Le choix du mètre élégiaque de la part de Paulin s'explique à la lumière de la finalité de cette pièce, l'exaltation de l'amour chrétien, de ses valeurs et des sources bibliques, qui se traduit dans un bouleversement systématique du canon de l'amour élégiaque,<sup>38</sup> dicté par des

<sup>35</sup> Voir Pizzolato 1985, pp. 441-474.

<sup>36</sup> Costanza 1972, pp. 346-353.

<sup>37</sup> Voir Bordone 2007-2008, pp. 261-292.

<sup>38</sup> Voir Piscitelli Carpino 1993, en particulier pp. 118-119. Déjà Stace, en composant son épithalame en l'honneur de Stella et Violentilla, soulignait que, en vertu de la légalisation du lien d'amour avec le mariage, cesse la raison même de l'*obliquum carmen* (*silv.* I. 2. 26 ss.), c'est-à-dire de la poésie élégiaque.

raisons morales.<sup>39</sup> Cependant, cette innovation, comme c'est le cas de la *consolatio* du *carmen* 31, est conduite à l'intérieur d'une attitude extérieure respectueuse des canons du genre de l'épithalame : la structure du *carmen* 25, en effet, correspond pleinement à la structure typique de ce genre de composition fixée par le rhéteur Menandre.<sup>40</sup>

#### 4. 'Moralisation' de la poésie élégiaque et expérimentation formelle dans le milieu gaulois de la première moitié du V<sup>e</sup> s.

C'est justement l'« intégration critique » mise en oeuvre par Paulin de Nole de l'univers élégiaque dans l'épithalame chrétien, ainsi que la finalité protreptique conférée au genre de l'épître poétique et de la *consolatio* en distiques, qui peuvent fournir, à mon avis, la clé de lecture pour bien comprendre la production élégiaque du milieu gaulois dans la première moitié du V<sup>e</sup> s. par rapport à son contexte socio-culturel. Si certains critiques ont cherché à expliquer la préférence singulière accordée par les poètes de ce milieu à la poésie élégiaque en tant que caractéristique propre à une littérature, comme l'avait définie Jacques Fontaine,<sup>41</sup> de l'« examen de conscience » poursuivie par ces auteurs suite à l'expérience dramatique des bouleversements apportés par les invasions barbares de 406-416, ou en tant qu'expression, comme le veut Georges Lagarrigue,<sup>42</sup> d'un véritable cercle des lettrés aquitains qui privilégierait des formes poétiques spécifiques comme la poésie élégiaque, j'ai cherché à approfondir la perspective de Maria Grazia Bianco,<sup>43</sup> qui dans un travail sur le *Commonitorium* d'Orientius, a identifié le thème principal de cette production

<sup>39</sup> Pour cet aspect, voir Basson 1996, pp. 267-276. C'est pourquoi je ne partage pas l'opinion de Consolino 2008, p. 275, selon laquelle l'emploi du distique élégiaque représenterait un simple détachement de Paulin de la tradition profane, où l'épithalame est en hexamètres : à mon avis, Paulin vise plutôt à s'approprier de l'univers élégiaque en christianisant la poésie d'amour dans le cadre de la légitimité du chaste mariage chrétienne.

<sup>40</sup> Piscitelli Carpino 1993, p. 118.

<sup>41</sup> Fontaine 1981, pp. 229 ss.

<sup>42</sup> Lagarrigue 1980, pp. 19-22.

<sup>43</sup> Bianco 1987, pp. 33-68.

dans l'opposition, d'origine paulinienne (1 Cor 1. 20-30), entre les fausses valeurs de la *sapientia mundi*, les richesses, les honneurs, la gloire, la culture profane, et la *sapientia Christi*, toute axée justement sur la *sequela* radicale du Christ et de sa croix. Il s'agit d'une alternative nette, expression de la diffusion de la spiritualité monastique dans le milieu gaulois, entre deux différentes modalités de vie, qui ne peuvent jamais aboutir à une synthèse. En effet, dans un travail consacré à une confrontation serrée entre le *Com-mitorium* et l'*Ad coniugem* attribué à Prosper,<sup>44</sup> j'ai montré que cette vision se révèle, à une lecture attentive, une simplification générique : les compositions qui font partie de cette production littéraire, en effet, par rapport à cet idéal radical de la *sapientia Christi*, sans aucun doute central dans cette production, prennent des positions bien différentes. Pour ma part, sur la base surtout de mon étude de l'un des textes les plus importants de cette littérature, le *De Providentia Dei* de Ps.-Prosper d'Aquitaine,<sup>45</sup> qui est expressément dédié aux *rudes*, c'est-à-dire aux profanes cultivés qui ne connaissent pas bien l'Écriture Sainte,<sup>46</sup> j'ai indiqué un autre commun dénominateur de cette poésie : je pense que le processus de christianisation des formes poétiques, qui se développe ici, est justement la traduction littéraire du phénomène historique le plus important en Gaule au v<sup>e</sup> s., c'est-à-dire de la conversion au christianisme des élites cultivées du temps.<sup>47</sup> C'est pourquoi, si l'on voit la question de la préférence accordée par ces poètes à la poésie élégiaque du point de vue historique et culturel, cette préférence répond plutôt à l'exigence de christianiser, en valorisant les essais de Prudence et surtout de Paulin de Nole, le vers qui, avec, par exemple, la poésie d'amour élégiaque ou l'épigramme, sûrement appréciées par les élites cultivées gauloises, était l'expression propre à la poésie profane, parce que ces genres-ci constituaient justement la traduction littéraire

<sup>44</sup> Cutino 2006, en particulier pp. 345-350.

<sup>45</sup> Cutino 2011, en particulier, pour préface, pp. 23-24 ; 85-88.

<sup>46</sup> Ps.-Prosp. prov. 97-101 *Ista quidem melius divinis edita libris / cognoscenda forent, ubi legis in aequore aperto / promptum esset ventis dare libera vela secundis, / sed quoniam rudibus metus est intrare profundum, / in tenui primum discant procurrare rivo ; 970-973 Haec sat erit parvo rudibus scripsisse libello. / Qui, cum sincerum vivo de fonte liquorem / gustarint, ipsi profundunt flumina ab alvo / cordis et irriguas praebeunt fratribus urnas.*

<sup>47</sup> Pour cet aspect, voir Cutino 2012a, pp. 151-164.

de l'hédonisme de vie des classes dirigeantes avant la conversion au christianisme. Nous avons une preuve tout à fait évidente de cette association à travers un petit poème en hexamètres appartenant lui aussi à ce milieu, l'*Epigramma Paulini*, un 'pastiche bucolique'<sup>48</sup> où l'auteur, dans un paradoxe apparent, emploie la forme poétique pour détourner de la poésie même les destinataires de son poème, c'est-à-dire les élites des villes et les grands propriétaires terriens, capables d'apprécier des compositions de cette teneur, qui, par ailleurs, malgré les bouleversements du temps, étaient encore loin du style de vie radical des *conversi* promu par les ecclésiastiques.<sup>49</sup> Or, il est très significatif, à cet égard, qu'aux vv. 42-46 et 76-79<sup>50</sup> l'auteur ne se limite pas à stigmatiser la vanité de la *sapientia mundi*, toute axée sur le désir impie de connaître les secrets du monde, mais il critique les mauvaises lectures qui corrompent les bonnes mœurs, surtout celles des femmes, en citant, en particulier, l'habitude des femmes aristocratiques de chanter, sous l'apparence de Didon, la partie de l'Énéide dédiée à son amour pour Énée, ou de réciter, sous l'apparence de Corinne, les élégies amoureuses d'Ovide.

Dans cette perspective, donc, tout comme chez Paulin de Nole, moralisation des genres poétiques profanes et expérimentation formelle sont étroitement liées.

#### 4.1. La 'canonisation' du protreptique à la conversion : l'*Ad coniugem* de Prosper d'Aquitaine et le *Commonitorium* d'Orientius

Or, si l'*Ad coniugem* se rattache au modèle du protreptique à la conversion de l'épître 8 de Paulin à Licentius,<sup>51</sup> en le reliant,

<sup>48</sup> Fontaine 1981, p. 230.

<sup>49</sup> Fo 1999, pp. 67-167 ; Isola 2003-2005, pp. 315-333.

<sup>50</sup> Paul. *epigr.* 42-46 *At qui confessis vitiis et crimine aperto / non potuere capi – virtutibus imagine ducti / altius occulti foverunt vulneribus ulcus – / hos terrena trahit sapientia nescia veri / et miseros idem, qui decipit, incitat error. / Inquirunt causas rerum astrorumque meatus, / quae sit forma poli, cur longo flumina cursu / non pereant, latus iaceat quo limite pontus, / quaeque deo tantum sunt nota, recondita cunctis ; 76-79 : Paulo et Solomone relicto / aut Maro cantatur Phoenissa aut Naso Corinna. / Nonne cavis distent penetralia nostra theatris ? / Accipiunt plausus lyra Flacci et scaena Marulli.* Pour l'interprétation de ces vers, voir aussi Gallico 1982, pp. 163-172.

<sup>51</sup> J'ai montré comment déjà l'incipit de l'*Ad coniugem* (vv. 1 et 3-4) avec l'exhortation *Age, iam precor, [...] trepidam brevemque vitam / domino deo dice-*

sur le plan des contenus, au modèle de la vie chrétienne parfaite conforme à la grâce et résurrection du Christ,<sup>52</sup> énoncé par l'auteur de Nole dans le protreptique/consolation du *carmen* 31, et en faisant recours, sur le plan métrique, à la polymétrie, également bien représentée, à cette époque, dans la typologie de l'épître poétique, sans aucun doute c'est plutôt le *Commonitorium* d'Orientius qui développe de façon originale les instances pauliniennes. Il faut avant tout remarquer que, dans son *Commonitorium*, Orientius cherche à donner à la typologie du protreptique paulinienne la configuration d'un véritable poème didactique.<sup>53</sup> La composition commence, en effet, avec une préface (l. 1-42) articulée dans les canoniques *propositio* (vv. 1-16) et *invocatio* (vv. 17-42), sans toutefois que celles-ci soient distinctes métriquement du véritable poème, contre, donc, la tendance, déjà classique, qui devient habituelle dans l'Antiquité tardive chez les poèmes d'argument chrétien (Prudence) et non chrétien (Claudien<sup>54</sup>). Dans la proposition (l. 1-4), Orientius identifie le but de sa composition avec le motif de la véritable voie qui rétablit une hiérarchie correcte des valeurs, en libérant de la crainte de la mort et de la caducité des réalités terrestres, un motif qui se retrouve dans une préface dans le sixième livre du *De rerum natura* de Lucrèce (vi. 26-28). En outre, au poème didactique se rattache le fait que l'auteur se présente dans la composition en tant que maître de la voie correcte, qu'il s'adresse toujours aux lecteurs destinataires du poème, et que dans son exposé il se produit dans de nombreuses digressions/argumentations en liant les enseignements l'un à l'autre à travers les connecteurs habituels dans ce genre d'ouvrages.

*mus*, constitue une reprise allusive de l'incipit (vv. 1-2) de ce poème de Paulin : *Quare age rumpe moras et vincla tenacia saeculi / nec metuas placidi mite iugum domini*. En outre dans les deux compositions est valorisé l'image du joug doux et léger de Mt 11. 28-30 en tant que métaphore du choix du véritable chrétien : vois Cutino 2006, en particulier p. 348.

<sup>52</sup> J'ai remarqué comment le modèle de la vie chrétienne envisagé dans l'*Ad coniugem* est celui de la sainteté agonistique, basé sur références évidentes aux compositions pauliniennes : Cutino 2006, en particulier pp. 339-345.

<sup>53</sup> Voir Cutino 2006, pp. 317-318 et nn. 24-25.

<sup>54</sup> Sur les préfaces de Claudien, voir Felgentreu 1999.



En ce qui concerne la parénèse, au-delà de l'intitulé 'commo-nitorium'<sup>55</sup> qui, comme nous l'avons dit, ne remonte ni à l'auteur ni à la tradition manuscrite, le poète au début de son œuvre part de la définition de *summum bonum*, comme il est typique des protreptiques philosophiques.<sup>56</sup> Ensuite dans l'énumération des préceptes moraux qu'il faut suivre pour accomplir parfaitement le christianisme, le poème présente plusieurs points de contacts avec la parénèse pélagienne,<sup>57</sup> en particulier avec les contemporaines épîtres protreptiques en prose, celle adressée *ad Deme-triadem* – qui appartient sûrement à Pélage – et surtout celle adressée *ad Celantiam* – dont l'attribution est controversée –. Le *Commonitorium* semble bien être la 'traduction' poétique de celles-ci, tandis que pour l'emploi, en fonction exhortative, du thème de la résurrection et des peines infernales destinées à ceux qui n'accueilleront pas le message du poème, l'œuvre se rattache à l'argumentation du protreptique/consolation paulinienne *car-men* 31.

Enfin, il est intéressant de remarquer aussi que parmi les enseignements transmis dans le poème, le poète a donné un éclat tout particulier à la luxure,<sup>58</sup> si bien qu'à la fin de l'œuvre, dans la partie où il est question du jugement divin à la fin du monde, parmi les bienheureux, à côté de moines et de prêtres, est mentionnée aussi une catégorie de sujets avec lesquels Orientius identifie les destinataires idéaux de son texte, c'est-à-dire ceux qui ont fait le vœu de ne pas maculer le vêtement blanc du baptême par les rapports sexuels avec les femmes, et, donc, ceux qui ont choisi la chasteté du corps et de l'âme.<sup>59</sup> Nous pouvons trouver ici une autre preuve de la 'conversion morale' de l'univers élégiaque, qui était centré, par contre, sur le chant de l'amour terrestre, conversion poursuivie dans ces poèmes chrétiens conformément aux exigences esthétiques exprimées dans l'*Epigramma Paulini* cité ci-dessus.

<sup>55</sup> Ce terme indique en soi une typologie particulière de lettre étudiée par Lizzi Testa 2003, pp. 53-89.

<sup>56</sup> Voir, par exemple, Cic. *Hort.* fr. 58-59 Grilli et Cutino 1998, en particulier pp. 80-84.

<sup>57</sup> Cutino 2006, en particulier pp. 323-330.

<sup>58</sup> Cutino 2006, p. 320 n. 31.

<sup>59</sup> Voir Orient. *comm.* II. 325-330.

Dans cette ligne ‘expérimentale’ se place aussi l’hymne anonyme *Sancte Deus* qui transfère significativement dans cette typologie textuelle les problématiques existentielles présentes dans le *Commonitorium* et formulées en distiques, en les reliant, cependant, plus étroitement à la médiation salvifique du Christ, qui n’est pas centrale dans le texte d’Orientius:<sup>60</sup> l’auteur utilise en effet le cadre de la louange à Dieu créateur et sauveur à travers l’incarnation/résurrection du Christ pour demander à celui-ci le soutien dans le processus de libération du péché que l’auteur veut accomplir après sa conversion. Par ailleurs, l’hymne en distiques élégiaques attribué à Sedulius, la *Collatio Veteris et Novi Testamenti*, qui est, en fait, une brève histoire du salut chrétien, centrée sur l’interprétation typologique-chrétologique de quelques épisodes de l’Ancien Testament, constitue lui-même une importante innovation parce qu’il rattache au mètre élégiaque une typologie textuelle, la paraphrase exégétique de la Bible, comme nous l’avons déjà observé, normalement réservée à l’épopée.

#### 4.2. Le recueil d’épigrammes à vocation didactique : le *Liber epigrammatum* de Prosper d’Aquitaine

L’innovation formelle apportée par Orientius, c’est-à-dire la transformation de l’épître élégiaque à fonction protreptique en véritable poème didactique n’est pas appréciée par tous les poètes du même milieu gaulois. En effet, l’auteur du poème *De providentia Dei*, composé en 416/417, relègue le distique, selon la praxis de Claudien, à la préface structurée, par ailleurs, de façon originale – la préface est en fait une élégie ‘dramatique’ en 48 distiques, où le poète même interagit avec deux autres voix, bien connotées du point de vue poétologique<sup>61</sup> – ; et en marquant le passage de cette préface au véritable poème

<sup>60</sup> Sur cet aspect le poème se rattache de l’*Ad coniugem* plutôt que du *Commonitorium* d’Orientius, auteur auquel Müller 2007, pp. 211–227 voudrait l’attribuer (à cet égard, la métrique même, comme nous allons le voir, nous donne des renseignements précieux, en étant donné que la ligne suivie par l’auteur de l’hymne est tout à fait excentrique et, en tout cas, très loin de celle du *Commonitorium* d’Orientius).

<sup>61</sup> Voir, à cet égard, Cutino 2011, en particulier pp. 17–23.

didactique-apologétique, il souligne la nécessité d'employer à cet égard seulement l'hexamètre au lieu du distique pour ne pas faire obstacle au déroulement de l'argumentation.<sup>62</sup> À cette perspective se conforme Prosper d'Aquitaine dans son *De ingratis*, poème conçu en 426/427 en tant que véritable 'contrechant' du *De providentia Dei*, où le distique est employé dans la singulière prémisses/bilan (vv. 1-10) qui précède la véritable *invocatio/propositio* en hexamètres (vv. 11-21), pour s'adresser, tout comme dans le *De providentia Dei*, aux destinataires contemporains de l'ouvrage, c'est-à-dire les confrères marseillais avec qui il polémique.<sup>63</sup>

Par ailleurs, c'est Prosper même qui interprète de façon originale les instances en même temps éthiques et esthétiques, exprimées par la ligne Paulin de Nole-Orientius dans la poésie élégiaque, non pas à travers la transformation en protreptique ou en poème didactique de l'épître élégiaque, mais à travers une modification fonctionnelle du genre épigrammatique. Si, en effet, les deux épigrammes composées *in obtrectatorem Augustini*, contre un mystérieux calomniateur de l'évêque d'Hippone, et l'*Epitaphium Nestorianae et Pelagianae haereseon*, tout en gardant la spécificité formelle de ces typologies textuelles, appliquent à la polémique théologique l'épigramme scommatique et l'épithaphe,<sup>64</sup> c'est dans le *Liber epigrammatum* que nous assistons à une innovation formelle très importante. Avec cette œuvre, en effet, Prosper accomplit la christianisation du recueil classique de compositions brèves, vouées, d'habitude, avec une intention ludique et un ton léger, aux aspects variés des réalités humaines,<sup>65</sup> et, en en faisant un instrument d'achèvement moral et doctrinal – où c'est la polémique avec la *sapientia mundi* et les fausses vertus des païens qui joue encore un rôle significatif –, synthétique par

<sup>62</sup> Le préface se conclut, en effet, avec ces vers de passage (vv. 95-96) : *Ac ne sermo moram patiat ab impari versu, / heroï numeris corrige pentametrum*, pour l'interprétation des quels voir Cutino 2011, p. 177.

<sup>63</sup> Voir Cutino 2015.

<sup>64</sup> Le fait que toutes les deux épigrammes *in obtrectatorem* commencent avec des expressions tirées de *Ov. rem.* (vv. 361 et 389), fait rentrer ces compositions dans le cadre de la polémique littéraire : voir Cutino 2012b, en particulier p. 318 et nn. 47-48.

<sup>65</sup> Cette caractéristique est présente encore dans les épigrammes d'Ausone.

son caractère anthologique, et agréable, par son écriture poétique, il attribue à ce genre poétique les finalités didactiques des poèmes en hexamètres.<sup>66</sup> L'approfondissement théologico-doctrinal et stylistique, avec de nombreuses épigrammes longues, des *tituli* de Paulin de Nole ainsi que des finalités didactico-protreptiques exprimées par celui-ci dans le poème de l'*epist.* 8 et dans le *carmen* 31 et par Orientius dans le *Commonitorium*, convergent tous dans ce recueil qui est le premier, dans l'absolu, dans la littérature latine, d'épigrammes de contenu exclusivement chrétien. Prosper achève ainsi la christianisation du distique élégiaque, en conformant entièrement pour la première fois à ce mètre le recueil d'épigrammes<sup>67</sup> et en dilatant les limites de l'épigramme en de véritables élégies.<sup>68</sup>

## 5. Conclusion

L'examen capillaire que nous avons conduit des genres de la poésie élégiaque chrétienne dans la littérature latine des iv<sup>e</sup>-v<sup>e</sup> s., semble nous indiquer des motivations bien différentes, par rapport à la vulgate, pour justifier l'intérêt, en quelque cas exclusif, de certains poètes de cette période pour le distique élégiaque : il ne s'agit pas pour ces poètes seulement de produire une réflexion sur les événements contemporains dramatiques et de se replier sur soi-même pour faire un véritable 'examen de conscience'. Ce recours fréquent au distique élégiaque ressort plutôt d'une vision profondément anti-mondaine et moralisatrice. Il y a une claire ligne évolutive que j'ai appelée, en même temps, de moralisation et d'expérimentation formelle, qui des *tituli* de Paulin contenus dans son épître 32, caractérisés par la longueur des pièces et par l'approfondissement théologique-doctrinal, et de

<sup>66</sup> Voir Cutino 2009, en particulier pp. 205-206.

<sup>67</sup> L'uniformité métrique du recueil, dont les 106 épigrammes sont toutes en distiques élégiaques est une donnée isolée, si l'on excepte quelques recueils particuliers d'épigrammes de Martial, comme le *Liber de spectaculis* et les *Xenia* et *Apophoreta*.

<sup>68</sup> Sur 106 épigrammes nous avons vingt épigrammes longues – les pièces les plus longues, ép. 102 et 103, sont de vingt-quatre vers –, c'est-à-dire un pourcentage totale assez rare de presque pour cent.

la transformation en véritable discours protreptique de la part de celui-ci et de l'épître poétique – la composition contenue dans l'*epist.* 8 – et de la *consolatio* – le *carmen* 31 –, à travers la forme du poème didactique représentée par le *Commonitorium* d'Orientius, aboutit au recueil d'épigrammes de Prosper à vocation didactique. Ce parcours consiste justement dans l'accession à la perspective morale chrétienne des compositions brèves et de l'épître élégiaque, c'est-à-dire des genres qui étaient jusqu'à ce moment moins sensibles à la spiritualité de la nouvelle religion dominante parce qu'ils étaient liés aux réalités variées et multiples de l'univers mondain, fait de relations élitaires entre intellectuels, d'une conception hédoniste de la poésie en tant que *lusus* très raffiné. Cette 'moralisation', au-delà de la pluralité des formes pratiquées, se traduit, en dernière analyse, dans une sorte de *reductio ad unum*, c'est-à-dire à la naissance d'une poésie didactique en distiques élégiaques à côté de celle traditionnelle en hexamètres, qui, pour cela, une fois que les instances moralisatrices se sont réalisées, parvient très tôt au bout de ses ressources, sans connaître, donc, d'ultérieurs approfondissements.

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*Abstract*

The diachronic development of Christian elegiac poetry from the end of the fourth to the mid-fifth century AD is described, in order to point out the changes that different textual typologies undergo due to their 'conversion' to Christianity, viz. the innovation of their contents. The socio-historical context and the addressees of texts have also been considered. Furthermore, the form of elegiac texts is analyzed, with a peculiar focus on the different metrical choices. The detailed survey presented in the paper shows that two genres – short poems in elegiac couplets and elegiac epistles – are increasingly endowed with a specific Christian moral perspective: two genres which until then were less penetrable to the new religion, in that they were connected to the multifaceted aspects of the secular world of late antiquity, where elite relationships between intellectuals and the hedonistic view of poetry as refined *lusus* largely predominated. Such 'moralization' results in what we might call a *reductio ad unum*: new didactic poetry in elegiac couplets was born, in addition to traditional poetry written in hexameters, that – after accomplishing its moral aims – soon came to an end.

CECILIA PAVARANI

LETTERATURA E MEDICINA:  
PERCORSI DI UNA METAFORA  
NELLA TARDA ANTICHITÀ LATINA  
(IV–VI sec. d.C.)

Esplorare nell'età tardoantica il ricco immaginario che avvicina l'imperatore a un medico contribuisce a mettere in luce un rapporto sudditi-imperatore tendente a configurarsi nei termini di un affidamento totale dei primi al secondo, come fossero ammalati bisognosi di cure. Nei panegirici in prosa e nella poesia elogiativa viene assegnato al *princeps* un compito quasi divino nella cura del popolo; egli appare avvolto in quell'aura miracolosa che una celebre monografia di Marc Bloch, *Les rois thaumaturges* (Parigi, 1924), dice caratteristica della regalità nelle civiltà primitive come nelle più evolute. Sottesa all'identificazione fra imperatore e medico è quella fra lo stato e il corpo umano, assai diffusa fin dall'età repubblicana e altoimperiale.<sup>1</sup> Nel senecano *De clementia*, per esempio, tale analogia rappresenta uno dei fili conduttori dell'intera esortazione rivolta a Nerone: come il medico, egli è *vitae necisque gentibus arbiter*.<sup>2</sup>

La tarda antichità latina reca traccia di una simile concezione in particolare nella letteratura che ha per destinatari l'imperatore stesso oppure gli ambienti legati alla corte. È questa produzione 'ufficiale' il centro d'interesse della mia ricognizione, la quale considera soprattutto le metafore sfruttate in funzione politica e laudativa, immagini rivelatrici dei mutamenti nello *Herrscherideal*<sup>3</sup> e significativi *pendants* 'laici' al motivo del *Christus medicus*,

<sup>1</sup> Cf. ThLL VIII, coll. 540, 22 – 542, 40 (*s.v. medicina*) e coll. 522, 44 – 524, 5 (*s.v. medeor*); III, col. 1048, 10–22 (*s.v. cicatrix*).

<sup>2</sup> *Clem.* I. 1. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Béranger 1953, pp. 218–251 ('L'idée de l'unité: corpus imperii').

diffuso in maniera capillare fin dalle origini della letteratura cristiana. Se quest'ultimo topos è oggetto di numerosi contributi dedicati ad aspetti sia letterari sia iconografici,<sup>4</sup> mancano ancora studi analoghi riservati all'immaginario medico legato al *princeps*. Tale lacuna giustifica la presente rassegna, che si prefigge anche di illuminare le interazioni fra credenze laiche e cristiane nelle virtù risanatrici assegnate alla figura dell'imperatore e di Gesù Cristo rispettivamente.

## 1. *Il panegirico in prosa*

### 1.1. L'immagine nei *Panegyrici Latini*

Gli undici *Panegyrici Latini* d'età tardoantica, tramandati assieme al discorso di Plinio il Giovane a Traiano (del 100 d.C.), offrono la possibilità di studiare l'uso della metafora medica nella tradizione retorico-scolastica.<sup>5</sup>

*Paneg.* 11 (III), pronunciato a Treviri nel 291 per l'anniversario di Massimiano (il 27 luglio del medesimo anno), dimostra l'origine divina del potere<sup>6</sup> raccontando la guarigione miracolosa dell'impero da un'epidemia di peste che aveva imperversato per un quindicennio, dal 250 al 265 circa:<sup>7</sup>

scimus omnes, ante quam vos salutem rei publicae redderetis, quanta frugum inopia quanta funerum copia fuerit [...] morbis [...] grassantibus. Ut vero lucem gentibus extulistis, exinde salutare spiritus iugiter manant (15. 3).

Se qui l'epidemia è reale e il senso metaforico risiede tutt'al più nell'intervento imperiale (*salutem, salutare spiritus*), ricorre a un più netto traslato il senatore di Augustodunum anonimo autore

<sup>4</sup> Vd. almeno Dulaey 1994, Dulaey 2008, Ortiz 2013, Griffith 2006. Sulle interferenze, nel latino cristiano, tra l'idea di 'salute del corpo' e di 'salute dell'anima', cf. Mohrmann 1965, p. 17 s. Sulle raffigurazioni sepolcrali del *Christus medicus*, Knipp 1998.

<sup>5</sup> Per un quadro generale sui *Panegyrici Latini* vd. Herzog 1993, pp. 185-198, Lassandro 2000, Rees 2002 e Rees 2012, pp. 3-36. Cito secondo la numerazione introdotta da Baehrens (Lipsiae, 1874), la quale in cifra araba ha l'ordine di trasmissione nella tradizione manoscritta e in cifra romana l'ordine cronologico dei discorsi.

<sup>6</sup> Galletier 1949, p. 42.

<sup>7</sup> Lassandro – Minunco 2000, p. 120 n. 49.

di *paneg.* 5 (VIII), del 311. Per i *quinquennalia* di Costantino ringrazia l'imperatore, a nome dei concittadini, per i benefici fiscali accordati al territorio devastato dai Bagaudi.<sup>8</sup> Il panegirico è presentato come un' 'anamnesi a posteriori', sul paziente risanato, un racconto piacevole da ascoltare quindi:

iniunge patientiam sensibus tuis ut, quemadmodum praestantes scientia medici non aspernantur vulnera inspicere quae sanant, ita nunc tu paulisper audias Aeduum labores quos sustulisti (5. 3).

Il popolo rinasce alla gioia, come dopo lunga malattia (8. 3), grazie alla *divina medicina* costantiniana:

O divinam [...] tuam in sananda civitate medicinam! Sicut aegra corpora et onerata stupentium torpore membrorum resecata aliqua sui parte sanantur, [...], ita nos nimia mole depressi levato onere consurgimus (11. 5).

In *paneg.* 4 (X), pronunciato a Roma nel 321, Nazario di Bordeaux vede in Costantino un chirurgo che preferisce *lenire* piuttosto che *resecare*: *Sed (quod erat consentaneum clementiae tuae) experiretis remedia molliora ut, quod leniri quam resecari mallet, mitior medicina sanaret* (9. 2). La *clementia* di Costantino si fa qui immagine, realtà visibile nella cura paziente e graduale, la quale altrove è elogiata, invece, per la rapidità grazie alla quale fa dimenticare gli anni di malgoverno di Massenzio:

Facilior quidem, multo proclivior laedendi quam commodandi semper est via, vulnerare integrum quam sauciato mederi [...]. Nam quidquid mali sexennio toto dominio feralis inflixerat, bimestris fere cura sanavit (33. 5-6).

La metafora di una cicatrice non bene rimarginata, nel panegirico di Latino Pacato Drepanio a Teodosio, il 2 (XII), è utile a nominare solo *en passant* la disfatta di Adrianopoli, alla quale non conviene dare ampio spazio nell'elogio (3. 4). La potenzialità metaforica del lessico medico è valorizzata da Pacato con originale variazione rispetto all'equivalenza *princeps*=medico; egli si paragona a un medico prudente<sup>9</sup> mentre rievoca con cautela

<sup>8</sup> Messina 1980.

<sup>9</sup> Vd. Quint. *inst.* II. 3. 6 per l'accostamento oratore-medico.

la politica teodosiana, prudente in tempi difficili (*Faciam ergo quod facere praestantes scientia medicos saepe vidi: aliorum vulnerum cicatrices, postquam cutem sanitate duxerunt, manu pendente tractabo*, 3. 5). Nel panegirico, il più tardo della raccolta (389), il motivo della guarigione si configura come topico; una precisa reminiscenza verbale – *praestantes scientia medicos* riproduce *paneg.* 5 (VIII). 5. 3 *praestantes scientia medici* – è indizio di una rete di riferimenti interni al corpus panegiristico e del riuso dei discorsi precedenti come risorsa inventiva, al di là della specifica occasione di ognuno. Pacato raccoglie pure l'eredità del noto passo platonico del *Politico* (297e) in cui le immagini di medico e timoniere sono dette indispensabili a raffigurare l'azione di un'autorità benefattrice; l'imperatore è associato a entrambe le figure in 24. 3:

Si dulcis in bonis miseriarum recordatio est, si nautas tempestatum, si medicos iuvat meminisse morborum, cur non tu quoque mala nostra audias ut tua beneficia recognoscas?

La proposizione vale a chiudere la rassegna delle figure di stampo medico e corporale nei *Panegyrici Latini*, poiché offre una sintesi efficace dei punti trattati in precedenza. Il motivo del risanamento è piegato sia a un fine celebrativo-parenetico sia a un fine contingente: a servizio del primo il panegirista evoca i mali che il *princeps-medicus* ha guarito (fornendo al *laudandus* un modello da seguire pure in futuro) ed esprime la gratitudine che gli è dovuta; a favore del secondo opera invece l'invito all'ascolto diretto all'imperatore stesso e, indirettamente, al pubblico; tale linguaggio simbolico, dunque, è anche utile a valorizzare, a legittimare direi, il momento stesso della recita dell'opera e, complessivamente, l'attività creativa del retore-panegirista.<sup>10</sup>

## 1.2. Simmaco

Esprimendo, nel 376, la propria gratitudine per il consolato concesso da Graziano al proprio padre, Simmaco attribuisce al giovane imperatore il merito di mantenere il corpo dello stato unito

<sup>10</sup> Per l'immaginario medico in Pacato cf. pure 2 (XII). 24. 5-6 (la Gallia ha sofferto dei *vulnera* infertigli da Massimo) e 46. 3 (Roma ha ricevuto *cicatrices* più profonde nel corso di guerre civili che da nemici esterni).

e sano grazie alla concordia fra le ‘membra’ (i senatori) e il ‘capo’ dello stato: *unum corpus est rei publicae adque ideo maxime viget, quia capitis robusta sanitas valetudinem membrorum tuetur* (or. 4. 6); la stessa idea affiora nell’*epist.* 2 del libro x, dove l’azione salvifica dell’imperatore<sup>11</sup> e l’elogio a lui tributato sono legati: *Laus tua, domine Gratiane, officium est meum, quoniam ita animatus es ut, cum reipublicae medicinam facis, operam meae vocis accersas* (x. 2. 2).<sup>12</sup> Nella *Relatio* 37 a Valentiniano, Teodosio e Arcadio (autunno 384), l’allora *praefectus Urbi* spera che i *salutaria Numina* degli Augusti, invocati dal senato (*cum per se mederi adfectis rebus nequiret*), accordino in prima persona gli aiuti finanziari necessari a risolvere la crisi frumentaria, dato che le autorità competenti *tantum mediocribus causis valent ferre medicinam* (1-2).<sup>13</sup>

### 1.3. Ausonio

Decimo Magno Ausonio dedica a Graziano *princeps-medicus* un capitolo del discorso di ringraziamento per il consolato da lui rivestito nel 379. La tecnica letteraria prescelta è la *comparatio* con un illustre esempio del passato (*grat.* 17):<sup>14</sup>

Aegrotantes amicos Traianus visere solebat: hactenus in eo comitas praedicanda est: tu et visere solitus et mederi praebes ministros, instruis cibos, fomenta dispensas, sumptum adicis

<sup>11</sup> Sono ‘terapeutici’ anche gli interventi di magistrati al servizio dello stato: in *epist.* ix. 29, al vicario di Roma Varo, durante la crisi gildonica (*mederis adversis [...] salutare laborantibus manum porrigis*); in *epist.* ix. 136. 1 (i *curiales* di Formia, impoveriti, necessitano di ‘assistenza medica’; nell’*epist.* x. 1. 2 a Teodosio *senior* (i successi contro Firmo guariscono l’Africa: *Africa revaluit ex morbo sane invictorum principum medente consilio, quorum remedium tu fuisti*, 2); in *epist.* ii. 13. 2 le leggi sono potenti ‘medicinali’ contro la cupidigia dei privati.

<sup>12</sup> Ancora più incisive sono le parole attribuite a Graziano da Temistio, sempre nel 376, quando – in visita a Roma – tenne il *Discorso d’amore*: ἀκείνται δὲ καὶ βεβλημένους, δυσχεραίνει δὲ ὅτι μὴ οἷός τε ἀναστῆσαι τοὺς τεθνεώτας (p. 174 H.).

<sup>13</sup> Nella corrispondenza privata il tema della salute è onnipresente (per esempio, Simmaco nomina gli archiatri suoi conoscenti: Dionysius in *epist.* ix. 4. 1 e, forse, in *epist.* viii. 64. 1; Dysarius in *epist.* iii. 37. 1 e ix. 44. 1, citato anche da Macrobio; Eusebius in *epist.* v. 36). La medicina è la consolazione che viene dalle lettere ricevute (*epist.* i. 54. 1, iii. 6. 5, iv. 17. 1, v. 12. 12, ix. 89. 1) o che si dona scrivendo agli amici (*epist.* i. 58 a Sesto Petronio Probo), è il rimedio a un’ingiustizia (*epist.* vii. 108) o la pazienza che lenisce il dolore (*epist.* vi. 22).

<sup>14</sup> Ed. Green 1991.

medellarum, consolaris affectos, revallescentibus gratularis. [...] vidi te circumire tentoria, 'satin salve?' quaerere, tractare vulnera sauciorum et ut salutiferae apponerentur medellae atque ut non cessaretur instare. Vidi quosdam fastidientes cibum te commendante sumpsisse. [...] omnia agere indefesse et benigne, pietate maxima, ostentatione nulla, omnia praebere aegris, nihil exprobrare sanatis. Inde cunctis salute nostra carior factus meruisti ut haberes amicos obnoxios promptos devotos fideles, in aevum omne mansuros, quales caritas potius quam fortuna conciliat.

In Plinio, autore del 'classico' del genere panegiristico,<sup>15</sup> Traiano – maestro di *comitas* – si limitava a visitare gli infermi,<sup>16</sup> Graziano è invece *et visere solitus et mederi*: cura i malati, li fornisce di assistenza, procura loro cibo, ricostituenti, denaro per le medicine, li consola nelle sofferenze, si congratula per la loro convalescenza, tocca le piaghe dei feriti e agevola il trasporto di chi ha difficoltà motorie. Se l'imperatore supera ogni precedente saggio di benevolenza imperiale verso i sudditi è perché l'autore gareggia coi modelli letterari che ha alle spalle, tutti sbiaditi se paragonati alle virtù guaritrici di Graziano.<sup>17</sup>

## 2. La poesia panegiristica

### 2.1. Claudiano

L'immaginario medico è assai sfruttato anche da Claudiano. Non ripeterò qui i risultati di un mio recente esame dedicato alle metafore mediche nella poesia dell'Alessandrino;<sup>18</sup> rileverò tut-

<sup>15</sup> Herzog 1993, p. 188.

<sup>16</sup> *Quid? Cum solacium fessis, aegris opem ferres* (Plin. *pan.* 13. 3).

<sup>17</sup> Non è da escludere che per la dettagliata descrizione il Bordoiese si ispirasse alla figura del padre Giulio Ausonio, un medico (vd. *praef.* 1.13-15 ed *epic. in patrem* 1-2; la medicina era praticata anche dalla 'mascolina' zia materna, Emilia Ilaria: *parent.* 6. 6 s.); certo è che le metafore mediche in Ausonio sono numerose: vd. l'epistola di dedica del *Griphus ternarii numeri*, dove la vena artistica è *poetica scabies* (vv. 18-22) e il v. 69 del carne, che fa della medicina un'arte tripartita); in *prof.* 26, sorprendentemente (cf. Green 1991, p. 363), la disciplina è fra quelle in grado di procurare buona fama ai professori (vv. 1-5), preziosa testimonianza sulla formazione dei retori di professione.

<sup>18</sup> Cecilia Pavarani, *Stilicone medico dell'Impero, Seminario Internacional de jóvenes investigadores 'Alteridad cultural y bilingüismo literario en el imperio romano (ss. III-IV):*



tavia che, in numerosi passi di alta intensità drammatica, a essere ritratto come medico-chirurgo è l'eroe di Claudiano, Stilicone, e mai l'imperatore in carica (Teodosio, Arcadio od Onorio). Nel *De consulatu Stilichonis* il poeta asserisce che il 'generalissimo' è superiore ai *principes* del passato ed è in grado di rimediare ai loro errori strategici; le cicatrici inferte dai barbari all'impero potranno infatti consolidarsi (*crescere*) e coprire la ferita (*Romanum vulnus tectura cicatrix*), a condizione che a curarla sia il Vandalò (II. 202-205):<sup>19</sup>

sub tot principibus quaecumque amisimus olim,  
tu reddis; solo poterit Stilichone medente  
crescere Romanum vulnus tectura cicatrix.

## 2.2. Prudenzio

Aurelio Prudenzio Clemente, la cui attività poetica è pressappoco contemporanea a quella di Claudiano,<sup>20</sup> raffigura Teodosio come *princeps* guaritore in apertura del Libro I del *Contra Symmachum*; la serie di immagini è tanto estesa da potersi dire allegorica: la medicina *principis* (vv. 3-4), la politica religiosa anti-pagana inaugurata con l'Editto di Tessalonica del 380 e culminata nella legislazione del 391 e del 392,<sup>21</sup> ha risanato Roma ammalata (*aegram Urbem*) dai mali del paganesimo (*c. Symm. I. 1-8*):

Credebam vitiis aegram gentilibus urbem  
iam satis antiqui pepulisse pericula morbi  
nec quidquam restare mali postquam medicina  
principis inmodicos sedarat in arce dolores.  
Sed, quoniam renovata luis turbare salutem  
temptat Romulidum, patris inploranda medella est.<sup>22</sup>

*géneros históricos y panegíricos*, 27 octubre 2012, Universidad de Navarra, Pamplona.

<sup>19</sup> Ed. Hall 1985.

<sup>20</sup> Per i rapporti tra Claudiano e Prudenzio cf. Cameron 1970, Appendix B, pp. 469-473, Shanzer 1989, Gualandri 1997, Gualandri 2000, Charlet 2003, p. 690 n. 42.

<sup>21</sup> *CTh* xvi. 10. 10-12. Cf. Ambr. *ob.* 4.

<sup>22</sup> Cito secondo Cunningham 1966 (Tränkle 2008 ne ristampa il testo).

La minaccia della *Relatio III* di Simmaco (*renovata luis*, 5), tuttavia, mette in forse gli effetti di tali provvedimenti<sup>23</sup> e rende necessario un nuovo intervento (*medella*, 6)<sup>24</sup> divino (*Patris*) e umano al contempo (l. 14–29, *passim*):

Vir solus cui cura fuit ne publica morum  
 plaga cicatricem summa leviter cute clausam  
 duceret et latebram tabentis vulneris alte  
 inpressam penitusque putri de pure peresam  
 iuncta superficies medico fallente foveret;  
 [...]
 Illa tyrannorum fuerat medicina videre  
 quis status ante oculos praesentibus ac perituris  
 competeret rebus nec curam adhibere futuris.  
 [...]
 Ast hic imperium protendit latius aevo  
 posteriore suis cupiens sancire salutem.

*Vir solus* (14), in riferimento a Teodosio, sembra replicare al claudiano *solo Stilichone medente* (*Stil.* II. 204) e riconsegnare un ruolo di primo piano all'imperatore, suggerendo una diversa concezione dell'esercizio del potere: se Claudiano descrive un *vulnus* 'fisico', che intacca l'estensione del dominio romano (*quaecumque amisimus olim, / tu reddis*),<sup>25</sup> il male guarito da Teodosio è immateriale (*animam letali peste piam*)<sup>26</sup> e il risultato della cura si perpetuerà nei secoli (*aevo / posteriore*). Il Teodosio qui raffigurato s'iscrive nella rivisitazione cristiana del personaggio messa in luce da un saggio di Isabella Gualandri: tra la fine del IV e il principio del V secolo alcuni intellettuali cristiani (Prudenzio, Paolino di Nola, Rufino di Aquileia e Sulpicio Severo) reagiscono a un'immagine ai loro occhi troppo laica del potere imperiale, rimarcando i tratti religiosi di cui Ambrogio aveva ammantato Teodosio subito dopo la battaglia del Frigido, tratti che Claudiano aveva sottaciuto, emarginando pure il ruolo dell'impera-

<sup>23</sup> Teodosio convince Roma a rinunciare ai riti antichi (c. *Symm.* I. 433 ss. e 496 ss.).

<sup>24</sup> Sull'arcaico *medella/medela*, rimpiazzato in età classica da *remedium*, vd. Ernout – Meillet 1951<sup>3</sup>, s.v. *medeor*.

<sup>25</sup> Formulazione ripresa nel 402, a proposito di Pollenza (*unoque die Romana rependit / quidquid ter denis acies amisimus annis*, *Get.* 633 s.).

<sup>26</sup> Cf. c. *Symm.* I. 519 s.

tore a vantaggio di Stilicone.<sup>27</sup> L'articolata metafora prudenziana prende le mosse, a mio avviso, dal luogo claudiano:<sup>28</sup> la ferita fatta rimarginare superficialmente è il rimedio di breve corso escogitato dai tiranni<sup>29</sup> per assicurarsi il consenso; la guarigione completa, in profondità, rappresenta invece la cura delle anime praticata dal buon principe, con sguardo proteso al futuro. Fra *tyranni* e *princeps* vi è allora la stessa distanza presente fra animali e uomini (c. *Symm.* II. 165-167):

Nonne hominem ac pecudem distantia separat una,  
quod bona quadrupedum ante oculos sita sunt, ego contra  
spero quod extra aciem longum servatur in aevum?

La speranza in beni che, 'al di là della vista', siano riservati *in aevum* è riposta nel vero Dio: Prudenzio tende alla spiritualizzazione dell'idea di salute, la metafora corporale si stempera, la fisicità delle immagini si dissolve a significare esclusivamente la salvezza dell'anima additata da Dio (II. 123-160).

### 2.3. Draconzio

Assente nella produzione panegiristica di Flavio Merobaude e di Sidonio Apollinare,<sup>30</sup> l'immaginario medico riaffiora allo scorcio del V secolo nella poesia del cartaginese Blossio Emilio Draconzio. Il contesto è quello dell'Africa sottomessa ai Vandali, al cui re Guntamondo il poeta domanda la revoca dalla pena di reclusione comminatagli per aver cantato le lodi di un uomo invisibile

<sup>27</sup> Dopo la battaglia del Frigido (6 settembre 394) 'per un quinquennio [...] la corte di Milano, attraverso la poesia claudiana, continua a mantenere una netta distanza dall'immagine religiosa di Teodosio che Ambrogio aveva cercato di imporre, e si rifugia nelle figure di un elegante classicismo ricco di aspetti convenzionali' (Gualandri 2000, p. 162).

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Garuti 1996 *ad loc.*; questo e altri paralleli fra Prudenzio e Claudiano entrano in gioco nel dibattito sulla data dei due libri del c. *Symm.*; cf. Cameron 1968, p. 406; Barnes 1976, p. 376 e n. 11; Shanzer 1989, pp. 455-458; Harries 1984, p. 76 s.

<sup>29</sup> Gli usurpatori sconfitti da Teodosio (Massimo e il figlio Vittore oppure Massimo ed Eugenio: Garuti 1996, p. 22 n. 9). Su *tyrannus* nel senso di 'usurpatore', Neri 1997.

<sup>30</sup> In Sidonio vi è una sola occorrenza di *medicina* (*carm.* 16. 126), nessuna di *medicus*; *cicatrix* è usato solo in senso proprio (*carm.* 7. 240 e *carm.* 23. 77).

alla corte, forse l'imperatore d'Oriente Zenone o forse Teoderico.<sup>31</sup> La speranza espressa dal poeta nella *Satisfactio* è di rimediare con versi nuovi alle parole scritte in passato: la grazia che desidera ottenere da Guntamondo è la guarigione che membra malate desiderano dal medico: *nonne manus medici languida membra petunt?* (v. 296). Nel riproporre l'equivalenza *princeps* = *medicus*, parla anche di Dio – come già Prudenzio –, suggerendo al potente d'ispirarsi alla *pietas* cristiana, oltre che all'arte medica;<sup>32</sup> proprio la fede del re, benché ariana, fa sì che Draconzio non mostri imbarazzo nell'attribuire la 'prestigiosa' qualifica a un *rex* barbaro, e scelga l'immagine come snodo finale della propria argomentazione persuasiva: la malattia da guarire – dichiara al re – come la colpa del reo, *materiem laudis praebebat tibi [...]* / *et titulos famae dat pietatis opus* (vv. 297-298).

## 2.4. Corippo

Sempre in Africa, ma al tempo della riconquista bizantina, Flavio Cresconio Corippo, nella *praefatio* alle *Laudes Iustini Minoris*,<sup>33</sup> si appella all'imperatore perché lo soccorra nelle sue disgrazie (43-48):

Nudatus propriis et plurima vulnera passus  
ad medicum veni, precibus pia pectora pulsans,  
ad medicum verbo pestem qui summovet uno  
et sine composito medicamine vulnera curat.  
Huic ego sananti, si qua est fiducia servis,  
grates semper ago et pro munere carmina porto.

<sup>31</sup> Sull'incarcerazione di Draconzio, evocata con particolare insistenza, e.g., in *Romul.* 7. 25 ss. e 69 ss., oltre che nella *Satisfactio*, cf. Moussy 1988, p. 144.

<sup>32</sup> Le *Laudes Dei* (Moussy – Camus 1985 e Moussy 1988) confermano che per Draconzio la medicina di salvezza è specialmente la misericordia: in II. 606-610 è l'*indulgentia* di Cristo; in II. 773 Pietro è medico di Tabità, la rianima (Act 9. 36-41) grazie alle preghiere dei poveri che la donna aveva aiutato. In I. 204 il frutto dell'Albero della Vita è *optatae vivax medicina salutis*. Come a ragione annota J. Bouquet, 'Dracontius manifeste un intérêt tout particulier à la médecine' (Bouquet – Wolff 1995, p. 91 n. 21); metafore mediche compaiono pure nei carmi profani (Bouquet – Wolff 1995 e Wolff 1996): *Orest.* (il *furor* di Oreste è definito *medicinalis*, v. 20), *Romul.* 7. 78 e 8. 171-175.

<sup>33</sup> Su Corippo vd. Charlet 1994, Zarini 2003, p. 141 s. (Annexe 1: *Vie et œuvre de Corippe*); sulle *Laudes Iustini*, Antès 1981 e Ramirez Tirado 1997; sulla prefazione delle *Laudes*, Zarini 2008, p. 180 ss.

Sfugge all'interprete moderno a quali episodi della propria vita si riferisca Corippo con *nudatus propriis* e *vulnera*,<sup>34</sup> è certa invece la fiducia in Giustino, espressa nell'enfatica *reduplicatio* (*ad medicum veni [...] ad medicum*). Il miracolo avviene per sola virtù di parola (*verbo [...] uno e sine composito medicamine*) e il canto scaturisce proprio dalla guarigione, che assume quindi una funzione 'poietica'. La ritrovata salute è, infatti, sia lo stimolo a mantenersi leale all'imperatore, sia una via d'ispirazione poetica; le ultime parole della *praefatio* (vv. 47-48: *fiducia, servis, carmina*) sono richiamate anche all'avvio del Libro I (vv. 5-7: *servis, mentem [...] fidelem, prae-commodo linguam*), a rimarcare il nesso tra guarigione, beneficio, fedele sottomissione e canto d'encomio.

La metafora qui adoperata per caratterizzare la relazione fra imperatore benefattore e poeta beneficato assume un significato più ampio, pubblico, nel Libro II: Giustino, appena incoronato, rivolge ai senatori un'allocuzione allegorica (II. 178-274):<sup>35</sup> l'imperatore è il *caput* della *res publica*, e la *sapientia*, che risiede nella testa, osserva *vigilanti lumine* le membra del corpo come da una cittadella arroccata (*corporis arcem*) guarendo gli arti che scorge affaticati (*peste laborantes*) e cacciando i morbi con apposite medicine (vv. 189-197). I senatori sono il cuore e le braccia, prossimi alla testa (vv. 200-204), il popolo è simboleggiato dalle membra meno importanti (*minora*), piedi e mani, comunque capaci di servire l'intero organismo (vv. 215-218). La natura di orazione ufficiale carica i versi di una funzione definitoria dello stato; la controllata articolazione delle immagini, assieme all'esegesi esplicita che ne è fornita, corrisponde al tono 'assai più bizantino che romano' delle *Laudes* rispetto alla *Iohannis*, la prima opera di Corippo.<sup>36</sup> L'elemento di novità è il dichiarato legame fra sovrano terreno e sovrano celeste (*utque deus voluit, propriis caput impero membris*, v. 214),<sup>37</sup> ma quella che il poeta propone è una sintesi di stilemi descrittivi ormai tradizionali: il lungo discorso, dai toni a tratti periclei (*iustitiam colimus, iustos vereamur, amamus*,

<sup>34</sup> Si tratta forse di un riscatto economico. Cf. Cameron 1976, p. 122 *ad vv.* 35-48.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Stache 1976, p. 297 ss.

<sup>36</sup> Vinchesi 1981, p. 69.

<sup>37</sup> Vd. anche v. 427 s. (*Terrarum dominis Christus dedit amnia posse. / Ille est Omnipotens, hic Omnipotentis imago*).

v. 258), dipinge tutte le funzioni dello stato (fiscalità, esercizio della giustizia, etc.) e le virtù loro associate in un organismo che funziona ancora come quello dell'antica Roma, in versi che si riallacciano al famoso apologo delle membra e del ventre raccontato da Memenio Agrippa alla plebe in rivolta contro i patrizi, al tempo della secessione del Monte Sacro.<sup>38</sup>

### 3. *Conclusione*

La medicina, arte nobile e prestigiosa – vicina alla sapiente (nell'auspicio del panegirista) arte del governare – è, per quest'ultima, termine privilegiato di confronto. La radice \**med-*, associata all'idea di 'misurare' e 'governare', oltre che a quella di 'curare', predispone i termini da essa derivati agli usi traslati: il linguaggio medico greco e latino nasce nel segno della metafora<sup>39</sup> e si presta a sua volta a ispirare figure di pensiero. Sono perciò insite, in tale base semantica, grandi risorse fruibili dall'immaginario extralinguistico, in particolare da quello che Quintiliano definisce il tropo più frequente e più bello.<sup>40</sup>

Durante il suo percorso nella letteratura latina tardoantica la metafora presenta una molteplicità di significati: concorre alla definizione divina della diarchia diocleziana (*pan.* 11(III)) e della clemenza dell'imperatore (è un chirurgo cauto in *pan.* 4(X) e un medico premuroso in Ausonio); elogia la rapidità dei provvedimenti di governo (*pan.* 4(X)) o raffigura lo sgravio fiscale da lui promosso (*Pan.* 5(VIII)); la 'guarigione' ha valore 'poietico' quando il retore o il poeta che ne beneficiano possono riferire il risanamento nelle loro opere, oppure quando essi invitano l'imperatore ad ascoltare i mali che ha curato (ano-

<sup>38</sup> Liv. II. 32. 8-12.

<sup>39</sup> Per il greco si pensi a, *ῥαφή*, 'sutura', da *ῥάπτω*, 'cucire'. Vd. Skoda 1988.

<sup>40</sup> *Inst.* VIII. 6 (*De tropis*). Metafora e corporalità sono associate e.g. laddove Quintiliano illustra lo stile semplice, privo di vani abbellimenti, ricorrendo all'immagine di un corpo sano e reso bello dall'esercizio fisico più che dalla cura meticolosa dei dettagli (VIII *prooemium*, 19-22). Su medicina e retorica cf. Mastroianni 1996. Della vasta bibliografia moderna dedicata alla metafora mi limito a citare, per documentazione e virtù di sintesi, Le Guern 1973, Ricœur 1975, Armisen-Marchetti 1990-1991.

nimo di Augustodunum, Pacato, Simmaco, Corippo). L'immagine del medico in azione è utile a fini patetici, soprattutto in poesia: in epoche di crisi e incursioni barbariche, dipingere l'impero come corpo malato, in colori talora 'espressionistici', orienta l'attenzione sui meriti di chi – anche senza essere imperatore (Stilicone in Claudiano) – è in grado di fronteggiarle. Nella poesia cristiana 'ufficiale', infine, le metafore prudenziane gettano un ponte fra l'immaginario pagano e quello cristiano del *Christus medicus*, che è, da allora, l'ideale di *pietas* proposto all'imperatore (Draconzio) e il corrispettivo divino della miracolosa sovranità terrena (Corippo). Immagine consueta nella soteriologia cristiana, applicata al *princeps* ne è la versione 'laica', ma i contorni tra *Christus* e *princeps medicus* sono sfumati quando a lodare l'imperatore è un autore dichiaratamente cristiano. Il topos evolve, quindi, trasformandosi da strumento retorico a specchio di una credenza; ciò grazie a un immaginario consolidato da secoli, all'assunzione di tratti divini da parte dell'imperatore e al diffondersi della figura di Gesù Cristo guaritore.

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*Abstract*

The rich imagery of medical metaphors in late Latin antiquity, especially those drawing a parallel between the emperor and the physician or surgeon, illuminates the relationship between the subjects and their *princeps*, presenting the former as absolutely trusting the latter, like patients in need of care. The paper focuses on a selection of significant passages from the literary production of the fourth, fifth and sixth centuries (*Panegyrici Latini*, Symmachus, Ausonius, Claudianus, Prudentius, Dracontius and Corippus), examining the changes in the *Herrscherideal* through a study of the physical metaphor of medicine. The almost superhuman task of taking care of people's health reveals a close resemblance between the image of the *princeps* and that of Christ *bonus medicus*; and healing, once obtained, is represented by some authors as their source of inspiration and so appears to have an interesting 'poietic' function.



SECTION II

THE TRANSFORMATION  
OF THE CULTURAL HERITAGE:  
PROSE



ROBERTA RICCI

AMBROSE, DEMOCRITUS  
AND THE *RISUS* OF THE *SAPIENS*  
(IOB 3. 5. 14)

The fourth volume of Erasmus' edition of Ambrose's *opera* begins with the *Hexameron*, whose first letter, a capital *T*, is decorated with the pair Democritus-Heraclitus.<sup>1</sup> Though their names are inverted, the two are painted, according to a well known tradition (at least since Seneca's period) as the philosopher of laughing and crying respectively.<sup>2</sup> The reason for this lies in the Renaissance interest in ancient philosophy and of course in Democritus' mention at the beginning of the *Hexameron*, but this picture may also introduce my assumption that Ambrose himself in his *Interpellatio Iob et David* (3. 5. 14) alludes to the pair.<sup>3</sup> More generally, in agreement with several scholars, I will attempt to demonstrate how such a commonplace as the hostility of the Fathers of the Church to *risus*, though undoubtedly correct, should not always be considered true for

<sup>1</sup> *Divi Ambrosii Episcopi Mediolanensis Omnia Opera Per eruditos viros, ex accurata diversorum codicum collatione emendata, Graecis quae vel aberant, vel erant corruptissima plerisque in locis feliciter restitutis, in quatuor ordines digesta* [etc.], Basileae 1527.

<sup>2</sup> For a history of the attitudes of the two philosophers see Lutz 1953–1954, in particular pp. 310–312 (for Democritus see *infra*). According to Lutz the origin of the opposition comes from the attribution to Democritus of a Περὶ εὐθυμίας: going forward, his εὐθυμία probably became γέλως, and this γέλως could have changed Heraclitus' traditional melancholy to tears. Naturally this pertains to art more than to reality, see Lutz 1953–1954, p. 312: 'The legend has broader implications than the sober facts'.

<sup>3</sup> For ancient philosophy in the Renaissance see Lepage 2012: Chapter 3 is solely about 'Laughing and Weeping Melancholy: Democritus and Heraclitus as Emblems', pp. 81–136.

Ambrose.<sup>4</sup> In fact, on at least one occasion, he approves rationalist laughter at earthly injustice, and in certain conditions does not ignore the opportunity of (politely) laughing and quipping. Finally, I will attempt to find Democritus' reminiscences in Ambrose's works, for the former was an expert at laughing.

Before discussing Ambrose, I would also like to note that the diptych of the two philosophers became a great success in Europe, especially since the Renaissance, and that Italian Humanism, and *in primis* Leon Battista Alberti was familiar with Democritus' laughter.<sup>5</sup> Erasmus too, in his preface to *Moriae encomium*, a letter to Thomas More, states that Thomas *omnino in communi mortaliū vita Democritum quendam agere*; Rabelais, in *Gargantua* (I. 20), recognizes in people laughing to tears the images of Democritus playing Heraclitus and Heraclitus playing Democritus. Again, in *The Complaynt of Scotland* (c. 1550), attributed to Robert Wedderburn from Dundee, the topic comes from Seneca.<sup>6</sup> The Stoic philosopher is also mentioned by Arnoldus Gheyloven (*Gnotosolitos parvus*, I. 7. 3. 4), in the first part of the XV century. Later, in *La galleria del cavalier Marino divisa in pitture e sculture* (1620), we find a poem dedicated to Democritus-Heraclitus, and the preface of Robert Burton's (alias *Democritus Junior*) *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621) includes some Latin verses quoting the two philosophers. They occur again in Horace Walpole's letter to Sir Horace Mann dated 31 December 1769, after the famous statement: *This world is a comedy to those that think, a tragedy to those that feel: a solution of why Democritus laughed and Heraclitus wept.*

<sup>4</sup> Several papers in the *miscellanea* Mazzucco 2007 reduce the importance of the commonplace of the Fathers' demonization of laughter. As Clausi (Clasi 2007, p. 9) confirms, if this *communis opinio* is generally correct ('bisognerebbe arrampicarsi sugli specchi per negarne del tutto la fondatezza'), 'Ciò non toglie che essa non rende giustizia all'importanza che al riso i Padri hanno comunque attribuito, sia pure con cautela, diffidenza e in qualche caso aperta ostilità. Nel loro pensiero e attraverso i loro scritti il riso ha assunto un rilievo per molti versi inedito, integrandosi in modo strutturale nella stessa storia della salvezza'.

<sup>5</sup> See Cardini 2001: Leon Battista Alberti and other Italian Humanists, such as Cristoforo Landino and Marsilio Ficino, knew and made use of the pseudo-Hippocratic letters about Democritus' supposed madness, p. 185 (about these letters see *infra*).

<sup>6</sup> See Stewart 1986.



We could continue to give examples, but following the topic in the literature and art fields would take us very far from the point.<sup>7</sup> We could also consider music,<sup>8</sup> and should at least mention Bramante's fresco at the *Pinacoteca di Brera*, Jacob Jordaens and Rubens.<sup>9</sup> Again, some scholars believe that in his self-portrait conserved at the Wallraf Museum of Cologne, Rembrandt painted himself as Democritus laughing, while making a portrait of his anti-type, Heraclitus.<sup>10</sup>

However, at the end of this *excursus* we can borrow a noteworthy remark from Edgard Wind: in spite of biblical recommendations against laughter and those of medieval monastic communities, in modern Europe, at least since Humanism (especially in its Neoplatonic tendencies), Democritus' *risus* was largely preferred to Heraclitus' tears, although at first glance Heraclitus seems to show a more philanthropic attitude.<sup>11</sup> We can recognize

<sup>7</sup> For other works mindful of Democritus' *risus* alone or in contrast with Heraclitus, in particular since the XVI century, see Lutz 1953, Wind 1937, Jehasse 1980 (the former at pp. 51–53 mentions *Les dialogues* by Jacques Tahureau, b. 1527 d. 1555) and Maffei 2012. We find reminiscences even in the XIX century, as in the *pièce* by Friedrich Wehl (1821–1890) *Demokritos und Heraklit oder: Der lachende und der weinende Philosoph*, or in the philosophical essays by Karl J. Weber entitled *Demokritos oder Hinterlassene Papiere eines lachenden Philosophen* (1832–1836). Among scholars, see at least Starobinski 1989, with the debate of 3 December 1988 at the *Sorbonne*: here the author considers the connection of philosophy, irony and melancholy.

<sup>8</sup> Experimenting with the expressive potential of tonalities, Giacomo Carissimi (1604–1674) set to music a duet written by Domenico Benigni, *I filosofi*, with Democritus and Heraclitus talking about love, the former with irony and the latter with compassion. Later we find them, not so gloriously, as farcical characters in some eighteen-century operettas, such as Antonio Salieri's, *Eraclito e Democrito* (1795): see Einstein 1937.

<sup>9</sup> For Bramante see Kiang 1988. For the iconography of the pair see Maffei 2012, pp. 203–219: she notes how in the XVII century the topic was well known because of its implications with physiognomical types, pp. 203–204, 213–214. On Marsilio Ficino's gymnasium, perhaps similar to Sidonius', see Blankert 1966–1967. According to Wind, most of the artists simply represent two opposing attitudes taken to excess: 'Yet the most famous representation, that of Rubens [...], gives a distinct preference to Democritus by handing him the philosopher's globe which Heraclitus lacks' (Wind 1937, p. 181). On Rubens see Huemer 2009.

<sup>10</sup> See Lutz 1953, p. 313.

<sup>11</sup> For religion's hostility to laughter see Resnick 1987 and Trisoglio 2007. On laughter in the Middle Ages see Le Goff 2006. According to Cardini, the revaluation of rationalistic laughing is typical of Italian Humanism (Cardini

this Christian Democritus e.g. in Cornelis van Haarlem's portrait of the pair, where the laughing subject lays down his hand on a globe surmounted by a crucifix; similarly, in the same subject painted by Jan Harmensz van Bijert, the globe is decorated with a grapevine, another Christian symbol, c. 1640.<sup>12</sup>

In short, if we consider the Christian background of many of these works, Democritus' victory is full of interest even for Ambrose, because in the passage of the *Interpellatio*, which we will tackle, laughter is preferred to upset as *risus* means indifference to this world's injustice, though the Fathers are generally considered responsible for the death of laughter.<sup>13</sup>

In any case, we should not overlook that laughing is everything but the only attitude Ambrose shows against injustice. For example, in the first chapter of the *De Nabuthae* we can read angry words at the greed and cruelty of the upper class. Again, far from this *indignatio* and according to Christian faith, the solution of earthly injustice will appear in life to come after death. In such passages as *off.* I. 12.40 – 16.64 or in *psalm. 118 serm.* 21. 17–20 (in § 20 Ambrose states that seeing an honest person in misery and a dishonest person with richness, honors and sons could be a temptation) the success of the evil is faced from a religious and eschatological point of view rather than on philosophical grounds, and Ambrose is clearly worried about mankind's trust in God. The point here is to gain eternal life.

Another perspective is found in *Iob* 3. 3. 9: here misfortunes are not disgraces, but proof that God will take his sons with him.

2001, pp. 182–188). Wind 1937, pp. 180–181 quotes Erasmus, Montaigne, Landino, Pierre de Besse and the German theologian Joseph C. Dippel, who at the end of the XVII century signed his work as *Christianus Democritus*. Heraclitus too does not lack supporters, such as John Ridewall, the author of *Fulgentius Metaforalis* (XIV century), and Francesco Petrarca, who in *De remediis utriusque fortunae* attributed *pietas* to Heraclitus and *superbia* to Democritus (II. 89): see Maffei 2012, p. 199 n. 30.

<sup>12</sup> I have studied Democritus' laughter especially in Christian contexts, but *a fortiori* his *risus* was the winning attitude when it became a sardonic sneer, in particular since XVII century portraits (cf. Maffei 2012, pp. 213–219).

<sup>13</sup> On Ambrose see e.g. Minois 2004, p. 142. Among the chief suspects for this murder we find Basil the Great, who states that Jesus never laughed: but Basil also was not always so negative. See Giannarelli 2001, especially pp. 517–518, and Giannarelli 2006 (for Basil p. 361), with some bibliographical information about the Greek Fathers.

A little further on, in 3. 5. 14, Ambrose introduces our argument: the opposition between laughter and upset. After some biblical passages expressing great doubts and upset about evil people's success, Ambrose assures us that the answer lies in God's *praescientia* and *providentia*. The *fortior*, I would venture to say by resorting to his intellect on the basis of faith, realizes the truth and laughs, the *incautus* is strongly disrupted:

Isti ergo in errore positi dixerunt: *Quomodo scivit Deus? Et si est scientia omnis in Altissimo?* [Ps 72. 11] Putant enim non esse in Deo scientiam, quia peccatores abundant prosperis saecularibus. Et adhuc inducit eos loquentes: *Ecce ipsi peccatores et abundantes in saeculum optinuerunt divitias* [Ps 72. 12]. [...] Sed patientia Dei non praeiudicat veritati et praescientia eius ac providentia hoc ipso amplius probatur quod in peccato positus successu affluit saecularium prosperorum. Quod fortior videns ridet, incautus trasducitur et movetur.

Aside from the two philosophers, what does Ambrose think about laughing? A complete exploration of the issue cannot be undertaken here, but I would refer the reader to Visonà's paper on comic elements in Ambrose, and add some considerations.<sup>14</sup> In a few words, there is not just mere hostility. He condemns laughter coming from lack of faith and injustice, and – as for pagan *bon ton* and rhetoricians – coarse laughing.<sup>15</sup> This disapproval concerns behaviors rather than theological questions: according to Visonà 'il vescovo di Milano [...] non appare interessato a una teoria del riso o a una sua fondazione esegetica o teologica [...]. Egli, piuttosto, è interessato a situazioni concrete e a categorie precise, come il clero e le vergini'.<sup>16</sup>

Above all, though he advises the clergy to avoid jokes in *off.* 1. 23. 102–103 (a ban he suspends under certain conditions), Ambrose himself makes wide use of jokes and copes well with comic theater tricks and diatribe commonplaces (see the *dives* in

<sup>14</sup> Visonà 2007, pp. 261–290.

<sup>15</sup> For *risus* in contempt of faith, justice and weak people see e.g. *hex.* 8. 20. 65; *exhort. virg.* 11. 76; in *psalm.* 1 29; in *Luc.* v. 70; *off.* 1. 12. 42; *epist.* 57. 8; for coarse laughter see *Cain et Ab.* 1. 4. 14; *Hel.* 5. 11 and 16. 60; *virgb.* III. 3. 9.

<sup>16</sup> Visonà 2007, p. 269.

*Nab.* 4. 18, who while eating an egg laments the loss of a *pullus*).<sup>17</sup> Finally Ambrose can laugh in everyday life for mere hilarity (*respondebam ridens et gaudens, exc. Sat.* 1. 39).

On several occasions laughter is also a sign of wisdom and moral (or psychological) superiority. In *exhort. virg.* 13. 89, he recommends laughing (an alternative to silence, § 88) at insults, as in the situations described in *Iob* 2. 2. 4 – 2. 3. 7 and 2. 3. 9. We find a surprising case in *in psalm.* 38 14: between two boxers, the stronger *percussus ridet*.

In wondering where this variety of positions comes from, we must not forget the Bible, where laughter is condemned or approved depending on the situation, though disapproval of the fool's laughter seems to be more frequent than approval of the man of God's joy.<sup>18</sup> The fool laughs at God and faith or mocks the good and the weak (cf. e.g. *Eccli* 27. 13; *Hier* 20. 7–8; *Mc* 15. 29–30; *Lc* 23. 35–36; *Act* 17. 32); the wise man, on the contrary, mocks his mockers and persecutors (*Prov* 3. 34; *II Mac* 7. 39) or smiles at the gladness emanating from his own faith (*Iob* 8. 21). Finally, the Gospel apparently shows a lack of approval – or at least interest – of laughter.<sup>19</sup> This is a very complex issue: in addition, in a number of passages Ambrose refers to Cam and Sara's laughter.<sup>20</sup> He also alludes to Jesus blessing those who cry, for they will laugh forever (*Lc* 6. 21), and promising eternal tears to those who laugh now (*Lc* 6. 25).<sup>21</sup> According to Visonà, Ambrose refers six times to *Lc* 6. 21, but just once to *Lc* 6. 25 (*off.* 1. 103): perhaps he prefers to talk about

<sup>17</sup> See e.g. *hex.* 4. 4. 17 (*Sed, ut videtur, quoniam de mari loquebar, aliquantum exundavimus*); in *Luc.* vii. 48; *c. Aux.* 23; *Hel.* 15. 53. On the *Scherzrede* employed in the *Hexameron* see Henke 2000, pp. 305–364. On theater cf. Visonà 2007, pp. 273–282, Jackson 1977, Courcelle 1972. Scenes from Plautus' theater have been detected in the *De Helia*. For Ambrose as a witty man see Giannarelli 2006, pp. 362–363.

<sup>18</sup> See the entry *riso* in Léon-Dufour – Duplacy 1976. Note that *Isaac* means 'laughter': cf. Ambrose himself in *Isaac* 1. 1.

<sup>19</sup> However, as we read in Mazzucco 2007, p. 192, 'anche se i riferimenti espliciti al riso sono scarsi ed è chiaro che manca un interesse specifico verso questo aspetto, non si può parlare *tout court* di condanna'. In this *miscellanea* see also Garrone 2007.

<sup>20</sup> See e.g. *Noe* 30. 115 (Cam) and *Abr.* 1. 5. 43 (Sara).

<sup>21</sup> On this passage see Mazzucco 2007, pp. 164–169.

the joy to come for the unhappy instead of threatening eternal tears for those who laugh in this life.<sup>22</sup>

In my opinion, when Ambrose praises laughing at persecution, he has in mind the Bible (*in primis* the Maccabean: see II Iac 11. 46), or the Christian Martyrs, even if we can recognize some elements from the pagan tradition of *dicta et facta memorabilia*, as Elena Giannarelli aptly did in Ambrose's tale about Lawrence (*off.* I. 41. 204–207). The martyr lying on the gridiron, with so-called gallows humor sarcastically commands his executioners to turn his flesh, cooked and ready to be eaten (*'Assum est' inquit 'versa et manduca', off.* I. 41. 207<sup>23</sup>).

On the contrary, I believe that the main source of the opposition between *fortior's* laughter and *incautus'* upset must be sought in the pagan tradition. We do not need to go back to Democritus to find laughter as a detachment from human affairs in pagan literature and philosophy: a scoptical attitude is typical of the diatribe, the importance of which in Latin literature and satire (therefore in vogue in the IV century) is well known.<sup>24</sup> But in order to seek out the origins of the rationalistic *risus*, we should go back to Hecataeus and Herodotus, who desecrate the inconsistency of the myth by laughing.<sup>25</sup> Then we should tackle Democritus, the Socratic and Platonic tradition, and Aristotle and the Garden (cf. *infra*),<sup>26</sup> not to mention the Greek and Roman rhetoricians, from Gorgias' theories onwards.<sup>27</sup>

In spite of this large number of sources, I wonder if the opposition between laughter and upset in the *Interpellatio*, while showing an intellectual detachment from earthly things, although

<sup>22</sup> Visonà 2007, p. 269.

<sup>23</sup> See also Ambr. *epist.* 7. 37. In my opinion, Pope Sixtus and Lawrence recall such pairs as Orestes and Pylades, as they are described e.g. in Cic. *Lael.* 7. 24. For other pagan *memorabilia* in this martyrdom see Giannarelli 2001, pp. 523–527. On martyrs' laughter see also Cacitti 2007.

<sup>24</sup> See Pennacini 2007.

<sup>25</sup> See Gigante 2007, pp. 239–240, and bibliography. Gigante recognizes in the two historians' laughter a 'modello della critica filosofica' (p. 240; note that 'Tucidide non ride').

<sup>26</sup> See Gigante 2007, pp. 240–241. According to Aristotle, man is the only creature able to laugh (*de p. an.* 673a6). For ancient Greece cf. Desclos 2000. For the Roman world see de Saint-Denis 1965.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Arist. *Rhet.* 1419b4. See again Pennacini 2007, and Celentano 2007.

supported by faith, may have been inspired by the pair Democritus-Heraclitus.

Democritus' laughter (according to Gigante 2007, p. 240 with a tinge of melancholy) was fairly well known, and we may suppose that Ambrose knew the story, for in Cic. *de orat.* II. 235, Democritus is said to have studied this subject (*Atque illud primum, quid sit ipse risus, quo pacto concitetur, ubi sit, quo modo existat atque ita repente erumpat, ut eum cupientes tenere nequeamus, et quo modo simul latera, os, venas, oculos, voltum occupet, viderit Democritus*).<sup>28</sup> In any case the complete tale is in the *Corpus Hippocraticum*, *epist.* 10–17, the insightful pseudo-Hippocrates' epistolary exchange with Democritus, and most of all about him. Moreover, according to the *Suda Lexicon*, Democritus' surnames were Σοφία and Γελασίνοϛ.<sup>29</sup> Many authors are interested in his derision of human madness, such as Horace in *epist.*, II. 1. 194 (*Si foret in terris, rideret Democritus*), Claudius Aelianus (*v.h.* IV. 20 and IV. 29) and others from the Second Sophistic school, such as Lucian.<sup>30</sup> In the same period as Ambrose, we find Claudian's *Manl. Theod.* 90 (*quidquid Democritus risit*): just a short definition in a list of philosophers. The *Fortleben* also includes Epicurus, Metrodorus, Polystratus and Philodemus from Gadara, so that the derision of foolishness, even better than that of colleagues, seems to be typical of the Garden.<sup>31</sup> Perhaps we can also find a reminiscence in chapter 6 of ps.-Galen's *Historia philosopha*: thanks to ἡθικόν we learn to mock the arrogant without hating them.

But even the diptych was renowned. According to Juvenal (10. 28–53) Heraclitus (whose mention is not explicit) *flebat* (v. 30) as soon as he went out, while Democritus *perpetuo risu*

<sup>28</sup> Several centuries later, the intellectual humor of Leon Battista Alberti, who knew the pseudo-hippocratic letters and Lucian, would mix together mockery and melancholy (Cardini 2001).

<sup>29</sup> Cf. *Suda*, s.v. Δημόκριτος: ἐπεκλήθη δὲ Σοφία ὁ Δημόκριτος, καὶ Γελασίνοϛ δέ, διὰ τὸ γελᾶν πρὸς τὸ κενόσπουδον τῶν ἀνθρώπων.

<sup>30</sup> According to Horace, Democritus laughed at the public's bad taste and manners in theaters (vv. 194–200). For Second Sophistic cf. also Flavius Philostratus in his *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* (8. 7 p. 321 Kaiser) and Lucian's *Βίων πράξις* (13), on which see *infra*.

<sup>31</sup> Gigante 2007, pp. 241–247.

*pulmonem agitare solebat* (v. 33), and in the poet's opinion *facilis cuius rigidi censura cachinni: / mirandum est unde ille oculis suffecerit umor* (vv. 31–32). But probably the success of the topic is due to Seneca (*tranq.* 15. 2–3 and *ira* II. 10. 4–5) who heard it from his master Sotion, who according to Diels wrote about Heraclitus' tears and Democritus' laughter in a *περὶ ὀργῆς*.<sup>32</sup>

Among Greek authors, I have already mentioned Lucian's *Βίων πράξις*, the humorous auction of philosophers by Zeus and Hermes: the two wise men are sold in pair and answer questions from a buyer, who after focusing on Heraclitus, rejects both (§ 13–14). Again, we can refer to an anonymous epigram from the *Anthologia Graeca* (ix. 148).

We can find the diptych or Democritus alone in Christian writers too, such as the apologist Hermias (*Irisio philosophorum gentilium* 13), Hippolytus (*Refutatio omnium haeresium* I. 13: οὗτος ἐγγέλα πάντα, ὡς γέλωτος ἀξίων ὄντων πάντων τῶν ἐν ἀνθρώποις) and Gregory of Nazianzus, who in his speech *In seipsum, cum rure rediisset* (or. 26), without mentioning the two philosophers, describes those who, steady as a rock, made use of the φιλόσοφος λόγος, but cried when they preferred to be more philanthropic (17–22). Again, we can refer to Sidonius' catalogues of philosophers, *carm.* 2. 171–172 (*quicquid Pythagoras, Democritus, Heraclitus / deflevit, risit, tacuit*) and *epist.* ix. 9, p. 158 l. 17 Luetjohann (*Heraclitus fletu oculis clausis Democritus risu labris apertis*).

Ambrose could hardly ignore such a widespread tradition, even though it is impossible to establish whether in his *Interpellatio* he was really reminiscent of it. In any case, his rationalistic *risus* is an antidote to upset due to evil people's fortune, not a reaction to mankind's madness. Another difference is that Ambrose does not mention tears: perhaps he is worried about weak people's faith rather than the outward signs of their sorrow. It does not cause any trouble that Heraclitus should be the *incautus* here, as Ambrose despises pagan philosophy on many occasions.

<sup>32</sup> See Diels 1879, p. 256 and Courtney 1980, pp. 456–457. Cf. Stob. *flor.*, III. 20. 53 Σωτῖωνος ἐκ τοῦ Περὶ ὀργῆς β'. Τοῖς δὲ σοφοῖς ἀντὶ ὀργῆς Ἡρακλείτῳ μὲν δάκρυα, Δημοκρίτῳ δὲ γέλωτος ἐπῆει.

But apart from the diptych, how much did Ambrose know about Democritus? The most elementary remark, but also the most reliable, is the mention of the philosopher in *hex.* 1. 1. 3 (just the page from which we started): *alii innumerabiles dicunt esse mundos, ut scribit Democritus, cui plurimum de physicis auctoritatis vetustas detulit*; no more than a note in a catalogue, such as those of Sidonius and Claudian, and probably without any specific knowledge of the subject.

Surely, Democritus' and Ambrose's common interest in moral issues concerning wealth and poverty is more significant; Ambrose is highly involved in this subject.<sup>33</sup> But there are also many fragments and anecdotes about Democritus' disdain for money.<sup>34</sup> At least on one occasion, as already noted, Ambrose translates *verbum de verbo* a fragment from Democritus (without mentioning him).<sup>35</sup> In *epist.* 36. 11 we read: *paupertas et opes inopiae et satietatis vocabula sunt, nec dives est qui indiget aliquo nec pauper qui non indiget*. The reference to hunger is quite obvious, but this passage clearly depends on the fragment we find in Stobaeus iv. 33. 23 (SL 652 = DK 68 B 283): Πενίη πλοῦτος ὀνόματα ἐνδείης καὶ κόρου. Οὔτε οὖν πλούσιος ὁ ἐνδέων οὔτε πέννης ὁ μὴ ἐνδέων.<sup>36</sup>

In addition, I did not find any similar periphrases to define wealth and poverty only as simple *vocabula*.<sup>37</sup>

We can compare another passage from Ambrose with Democritus. In *Nab.* 14. 58 Ambrose opposes the *custos*, someone who does not feel free to use his own wealth – the best way to use money is of course alms – to the *dominus*: *custos ergo tuarum es, non dominus facultatum, qui aurum terrae infodis*,<sup>38</sup> *minister utique eius, non arbiter*.

<sup>33</sup> See Ricci 2013 and bibliography.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. frgg. SL 626–657a. See e.g. SL 657a: the poor do not know the evils stemming from wealth: traps, envy and hate. As anecdotes cf. SL XI–XII, p. 24, XXVI–XXIX, pp. 34–38; SL XXXIV, p. 40; SL XLIII, p. 46.

<sup>35</sup> See Ricci 2013, pp. 82–83.

<sup>36</sup> See *auri sacra fames* from Verg. *Aen.* iii. 56, or Sen. *Herc. O.* 621 (*cupit hic gazis implere famem*).

<sup>37</sup> In *ben.* vii. 10. 3 according to Seneca *fenus, calendarium, usura* are just *nomina cupiditatis*, as *diplomata, syngraphai* and *cautiones* are *habendi simulacra*, but this is something different.

<sup>38</sup> About this *τόπος* see Ricci 2013, pp. 154–162.



In SL 630 (= Stob. III. 16. 24) Democritus states: τοὺς πολλοὺς τῶν πλουσίων ἔλεγεν ἐπιτρόπους εἶναι, ἀλλὰ μὴ δεσπότας τῶν χρημάτων.

According to Luria, some verses from Euripides' *Antiope* show that this topic was typical of the V century (frg. 198 N):<sup>39</sup>

Εἰ δ' εὐτυχῶν τις καὶ βίον κεκτημένος  
μηδὲν δόμοισι τῶν καλῶν πειράσεται,  
ἐγὼ μὲν οὔ ποτ' αὐτὸν ὀλβιον καλῶ,  
φύλακα δὲ μᾶλλον χρημάτων εὐδαίμονα.

As I have already observed, unlike the φύλαξ, an ἐπίτροπος performs administrative functions, so that these verses are closer to Ambrose's words than the fragment from Democritus.<sup>40</sup> Moreover, in Sen. *epist.*, 14. 18 we can read something similar: a person who cares about earning money without enjoying his goods *fit ex domino procurator*. If we put together Ambrose's, Democritus', Euripides' and Seneca's texts about the *dominus-custos*, they seem to be a variation of a fairly common diatribe's τόπος: the possessor possessed by his possessions.<sup>41</sup>

We should also note that Ambrose did know the Christian *custos*: our goods do not really belong to us, for we are just their *custodes* and our duty is to share them with the poor.<sup>42</sup> Purely because of the contrast with this good *custos*, the greedy *custos* from the *De Nabuthae* could reasonably come from the pagan tradition.

I shall now conclude. According to Ambrose, just as in pagan philosophy, laughter can serve as a means of detachment from human society's injustice: this positive attitude, in addition to

<sup>39</sup> Luria 2007, p. 1303.

<sup>40</sup> See Ricci 2013, pp. 166–167.

<sup>41</sup> According to Ambrose himself, the rich are *virī divitiarum*, because they are possessed by their own goods (*Nab.* 15. 63; but note that in Ps 75. 6 the *iunctura* means 'powerful'); see also in *psalm.* 118 5. 32 *Ideo dixit Dominus: 'Nolite possidere aurum atque argentum'* [Mt 10. 9], *ne nos auri atque argenti cupiditas avara possideat*. The idea is typical of the diatribe: Bion πρὸς πλούσιον μικρολόγον, οὐχ οὗτος, ἔφη, τὴν οὐσίαν κέκτηται, ἀλλ' ἡ οὐσία τοῦτον (frg. 36 Kindstrand = DL IV. 50). Seneca is also familiar with the topic: see *vit.* 22. 5 (*tu divitiarum es*), or *epist.* 119. 12.

<sup>42</sup> On the two kinds of *custodia* and for some examples of the Christian *custos* in Ambrose see Ricci 2013, pp. 168–169.

other statements and behaviors, may correct the general idea that Ambrose was always hostile to laughter.

Though it is impossible to establish whether the *risus* of the *sapiens* in the *Interpellatio* is due to the pair Democritus-Heraclitus, in Ambrose's works there is at least one clear reminiscence of a fragment from the philosopher from Abdera, as well as other similarities, which are harder to evaluate. We can read about Democritus and the diptych in many authors, and probably Ambrose himself did so. But where may Ambrose have found Democritus' fragment about wealth and poverty as *vocabula*?

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### *Abstract*

In Ambrose’s view, the answer to men’s doubts about earthly injustice lies in God’s *praescientia* and *providentia*: the *fortior* keeps this truth in his mind and laughs, while the *incautus* is disrupted (*Iob* 3. 5. 14). This passage could be reminiscent of the well-known opposition between Democritus and Heraclitus, and this kind of *risus* might be connected with the rationalist laughter typical of some philosophers. Furthermore, this paper deals with Ambrose’s general attitude toward laughter and jokes – which is anything but mere hostility – and with the references to Democritus found in Ambrose’s works.

GAVIN KELLY

## THE FIRST BOOK OF SYMMACHUS' CORRESPONDENCE AS A SEPARATE COLLECTION\*

Over 900 letters by Symmachus survive, more than by any other classical Latin writer, but they are little read. Compared to Cicero's, with their blend of mighty events and cheerful gossip, or Pliny the Younger's, with their essayistic elegance, Symmachus' letters can seem formal and uninformative, mere visiting cards.<sup>1</sup> If he does have 'greatest hits', however, the majority belong in the first book, where his correspondence with the poet and politician Ausonius has especially appealed to readers. There is no doubt that most of Symmachus' letters were published in a collection put together after his death in 402 by his son Memmius, perhaps following his father's instructions. But in 1972 J.-P. Callu, in the first volume of the only complete modern translation of Symmachus, proposed the theory that the first book is a separate creation, designed by the author and published in his lifetime. Support has been given to Callu's suggestion, and further arguments adduced, by those who have written on the topic since; and in this article I accept and develop the point. My aim is to elucidate the book's arrangement and purpose and to suggest a more specific date for its compilation, significantly earlier than proposed hitherto.

\* I am grateful to Paola Moretti for the initial invitation to the *Giornate di Studi* and a warm welcome in Milan; and to her and the other editors for countenancing an article on a subject different to that on which I originally spoke. I also thank the audience at an Edinburgh seminar in 2012 for their comments; Alan Cameron, Aaron Peltari, and John Weisweiler for learned and helpful responses, and Michele Salzman for collegially giving advance notice of Salzman 2015. Those named do not necessarily agree with my conclusions!

<sup>1</sup> A description revived by Matthews 1975, p. 7, from Dill 1899, p. 156.

As a corollary, I shall also aim to advance our understanding of the dating of individual letters within the book, whether by urging greater precision or, as is sometimes necessary with these difficult and allusive texts, greater circumspection.<sup>2</sup> Seeck's fundamental work in his great edition of 1883 was advanced by Callu, and further improvements have been made by Michele Salzman in a recent annotated translation of Book I.<sup>3</sup> But valuable though Salzman and Roberts' translation and Salzman's commentary are, I have some differences from this work on points of *proposopography* and chronology, and opportunities remain, in my view, for advances in dating.<sup>4</sup>

In what follows, I shall briefly introduce the *status quaestionis* on the publication of Symmachus' letters as a whole and of Book I in particular (Section 1). I shall then proceed sequentially through the book's eight addressees, discussing its narrative arc and the dating of individual letters or groups of letters in cases of uncertainty (Section 2). Finally, I shall propose a dating and context for Book I's publication (Section 3).

### 1. *The Organisation and Publication of Symmachus' Collection and of Book I*

As it survives, Symmachus' collection contains nine books of personal letters, and a fragmentary tenth book of letters to emperors (only two survive); the *Relationes* (whose connexion with Book x is uncertain) comprise his official correspondence with the emperors as prefect of Rome in 384–385. In the oldest manuscript, the Parisinus, a subscription to Book II and the heading of Book v offer the information that Symmachus' letters were edited after the author's death by his son Memmius Symmachus; Iurretus' edition of 1580, which had access

<sup>2</sup> If Symmachus edited and arranged Book I, it is likely that individual letters received some degree of editorial polish at the time of the publication of the book.

<sup>3</sup> See Seeck 1883, pp. LXXIII–CXII, on the dates of letters in Book I; Salzman 2015, pp. LXIX–LXXII, has a useful table with Callu's and her own datings [as I am not concerned in this article with the translation, I cite this work not as Salzman and Roberts but under Salzman's name alone. Readers should if possible consult the 2015 corrected reprint instead of the 2011 edition, but the pagination is the same].

<sup>4</sup> See Kelly 2015, a review of Salzman 2011.

to a manuscript closely related to the Parisinus, offers something similar at the start of Book x. So it was long thought that the collection was put together after Symmachus' death in 402, and relatively soon afterwards, given the prominent letters to Stilicho and Attalus, *personae non gratae* after 408 and 409 respectively.<sup>5</sup> However, a strong argument can be made on formal and other grounds that the collection published by Memmius contained Books I to VII only. These books are organised by addressee (a common principle of arrangement in letter collections), with some amount of ring composition:<sup>6</sup> the first letters of Book I to Symmachus' father and the first of Book VII to his son; Book II consisting entirely of letters to his friend Nicomachus Flavianus and Book VI those to Flavianus' homonymous son and his wife, Symmachus' daughter. The letters in Books VIII and IX are not organised by addressee and many lack addressees' names altogether;<sup>7</sup> there are no certain allusions to Books VIII and IX in the letters of Sidonius, published in the 470s, and the subscription assigning Book x to Memmius is different in form to those in Books II and V and may well be the creation of Iuretus. Sergio Roda has persuasively argued, therefore, that Memmius published a collection containing Books I to VII shortly after his father's death, probably following his guidance about the structure of the collection, and that the rest of the letters were published much later.<sup>8</sup> It has also been argued, again persuasively to my mind, that the *Relationes*, with their random arrangement and confusion of addressees, are a much later collection, published neither in Symmachus' lifetime nor in Memmius' edition.<sup>9</sup>

Such, in summary, are the major issues; but this article is primarily concerned with a separate question: whether Book I was published separately before it was part of any larger collection published by Memmius after his father's death. As I said, we

<sup>5</sup> For example Seeck 1883, pp. xxiii–xxvi, and Peter 1901, pp. 143–149.

<sup>6</sup> See Cameron 2011, p. 370.

<sup>7</sup> They are also absent from a significant number of manuscripts (Roda 1979, p. 54).

<sup>8</sup> Roda 1979 (reprinted in Roda 1981a, pp. 58–79).

<sup>9</sup> Vera 1977. For longer discussions of all these issues, reaching broadly similar conclusions, see Salzman 2011, pp. LVIII–LXVI, Cameron 2011, pp. 366–383, Kelly 2013a, pp. 263–267; see also Roda 1979, p. 45 n. 47.

owe this suggestion to Callu. He points out that the letters in the book belong to a considerably earlier period than most of those in other books, none later than 385; that they are, as we shall see below, written to an unusually distinguished set of addressees; that they have more linguistic archaisms than the later books (implying that Symmachus polished the style for publication); and that there are a greater number of variants (implying, perhaps, that Book 1 was published both by itself and posthumously with the rest).<sup>10</sup> Subsequent scholars have added support. Gerd Haverling's linguistic study has given statistical backing to Callu's observation on archaisms.<sup>11</sup> Sergio Roda has demonstrated beyond reasonable doubt that an anepigraphic letter in Book ix is in fact the very first letter that Symmachus wrote to Ausonius (ix. 88); another anepigraphic letter in the same book has long been recognized as apologizing to another addressee of Book 1, Petronius Probus, for Symmachus' inability to attend his consular inauguration at Trier in 371 (ix. 112).<sup>12</sup> The detachment of these two letters from the rest can best be explained as a conscious decision by Symmachus to exclude two letters whose sycophantic tone jars with his self-presentation in the other letters of Book 1 as the equal of the high officials he corresponds with. Meanwhile, Philippe Bruggisser has argued that Book 1 has a strong focus on the reign of Gratian as the senior

<sup>10</sup> Callu 1972, p. 18.

<sup>11</sup> Haverling 1988, pp. 136–137, 254–255.

<sup>12</sup> On ix. 88 see Roda 1981a, pp. 219–222, and Roda 1981b (the suggestion of Ausonius as addressee was originally made by Tedeschi 1724, p. 434; see also Havet 1892, pp. 69–70 n. 1). Coşkun 2002b's attempt to rebut this is unconvincing; Salzman 2015 rightly accepts the identification and dates the letter to 366–367 (pp. 39 and 41 n. 2, lxix). The key issue is that the letter must belong after Ausonius had become an *imperialis magister*, which makes no sense as a reference to any other office, but must mean 'a commander-in-chief's schoolmaster'. I think this probably means after 24 August 367, when his pupil, Gratian, became *imperator* himself, though it could simply mean after he entered Valentinian's service as his son's teacher. But that was impossible before Valentinian's accession in 364 and is most unlikely (despite various alternative theories; see Roda 1981b, p. 274 n. 12) before his arrival in Gaul in late 365. Salzman now dates Ausonius' appointment to 366–367 (2015, p. 36, against Coşkun 2002a, pp. 37–43). The *terminus ante quem* is Symmachus' arrival at Valentinian's court to deliver *or.* 1 (25 February 368, or possibly 369: see n. 32). On ix. 112 to Probus see Seeck 1883, p. xxv n. 49, and Roda 1981a, pp. 247–249.



emperor of the West (375–383).<sup>13</sup> Others working on Symmachus have also accepted Callu's argument, including Cameron and Salzman,<sup>14</sup> even if there has not been complete agreement on when Book I was likely published.

I acknowledge that although these various arguments prove that the book received more authorial polish, they do not prove, but rather only strongly suggest, that he published it in his lifetime. I hope, however, that the interpretation I offer will show that publication in his lifetime – and at the early date I suggest – is much the most plausible solution. Let us proceed through the addressees in order, with a focus on the dating of the letters, as well as on the sense of narrative and the image of Symmachus and his correspondents that they create.

## 2. *Book I and its Addressees*

The eight addressees of Symmachus' first book are as follows (I give them with their major offices, as best as can be reconstructed<sup>15</sup>):

1. Letters 1–12 *Symmachus patri* (except 1. 2 *Pater Symmacho*). To his father L. Aurelius Avianius Symmachus; prefect of Rome 364–365; consul designate for 377; died late 376.
2. Letters 13–43 *Symmachus Ausonio* (except 1. 32 *Ausonius Symmacho*). To Decimius Magnus Ausonius; quaestor 374/5–377; praetorian prefect of Gaul 377–378, and of Gaul and Italy 378–379 (both prefectures jointly with Hesperius); consul 379; died after 394.
3. Letters 44–55 *Symmachus Agorio Praetextato*. To Vettius Agorius Praetextatus; prefect of Rome 367–368; praetorian prefect of Italy, Illyricum and Africa 384; consul designate for 385; died October/November 384.<sup>16</sup>
4. Letters 56–61 *Symmachus Probo*. To Sex. Claudius Petronius Probus; four times praetorian prefect (of Illyricum c. 364; of Gaul

<sup>13</sup> Bruggisser 1987, 1993, esp. pp. 25–30.

<sup>14</sup> Cameron 2011, p. 368; Salzman 2015, pp. LIV–LVIII; Kelly 2013a, p. 265. Sogno 2006, pp. 60–63, does not credit the idea.

<sup>15</sup> For space reasons I elide problems of prosopographical reconstruction where they do not significantly affect the argument; I shall still note major issues.

<sup>16</sup> On the date of Praetextatus' death see Cameron 2011, Chapter 8; a similar conclusion already in Coşkun 2003, pp. 4–5 and n. 10.

- 366–367; of Italy, Illyricum and Africa 368–375/6 and again in 383–384<sup>17</sup>); consul 371; died c. 390.
5. Letters 62–74 *Symmachus Celsino Titiano fratri*. To Celsinus Titianus, Symmachus' younger brother; vicarius of Africa 380; died 380.
  6. Letters 75–88 *Symmachus Hesperio*. To Decimius Hilarianus Hesperius (son of Ausonius); proconsul of Africa 376–377; praetorian prefect of Gaul 377–378, of Gaul and Italy 378–379 (both jointly with Ausonius), of Italy and Africa 379–380; still alive 384.
  7. Letters 89–93 *Symmachus Antonio*. To Fl. Claudius Antonius; quaestor 370–374, praetorian prefect of Gaul 376–377, of Italy 377–378; consul 382.
  8. Letters 94–107 *Symmachus Syagrio*. To Fl. Syagrius; *magister officiorum* 378?–379; praetorian prefect of Italy, Illyricum and Africa 380–381/2; consul 381.

With the exception of his brother, who died relatively young while still vicarius of Africa, all those to whom Symmachus wrote held the highest civilian offices, the praetorian or urban prefecture; four were consuls and two died as consul designate. Moreover, various patterns can be detected: the first two addressees, Avianius Symmachus and Ausonius, belong to the older generation, a father and a father figure respectively (and these two are the only correspondents in the book or indeed Symmachus' entire oeuvre whose replies are published<sup>18</sup>); the second half of the book begins with Avianius' son (and Symmachus' brother) Titianus and Ausonius' son Hesperius (described by Symmachus in quasi-fraternal terms<sup>19</sup>). It may or may not be coincidence that the addressees alternate neatly between pagans and Christians (we can say as much for the first

<sup>17</sup> See Cameron 1985, pp. 178–182, on dating Probus' prefectures; as Cameron notes, his final prefecture should end in spring 384, when he was replaced by Praetextatus. On the probable duration of the third prefecture into 376 see Kelly 2013b, pp. 386–387.

<sup>18</sup> Another letter of Ausonius to Symmachus is, however, extant outside the collection: the prose *praefatio* of Ausonius' *Griphus*.

<sup>19</sup> For Ausonius as a father figure see I. 32. 4 *domine mi fili Symmache*, I. 33 *in nos parentis [...] affectio*; for fraternal language used of Hesperius see I. 16. 2 *fratris mei Hesperii honore exulto*. It would be wrong to overinterpret this phenomenon, as Salzman demonstrates (2015, p. 51 n. 4).

three pairs in the book; the religious affiliations of Antonius and Syagrius are not known): as Cameron has argued, Symmachus was keen to portray himself as religiously open-minded.<sup>20</sup>

## 2.1. Avianius Symmachus

The book opens with twelve letters between Symmachus and his father Lucius Aurelius Avianius Symmachus, of which the second is Avianius' reply to the first letter. Internal links clearly show that the first four letters of the book are a sequence from a relatively narrow period, identifiable as the year 375, and the locations of the correspondents imply the same period for letters 5 and 7–11.<sup>21</sup> The dating to 375 arises because Avianius refers (l. 2. 2) to the 'wretched memory of my misfortunes'. These misfortunes, nowhere explicitly described by his son, were presumably known to early readers: Avianius was alleged during a wine shortage to have said that he would rather use his supply to slake lime-kilns than sell it at the price the *plebs* hoped for; in response an angry mob burned down his townhouse in Trastevere and forced him to leave Rome (Amm. xxvii. 3. 3). A senatorial delegation asked him to end his unofficial exile and he returned in time for the senate meeting on 1 January 376 (Symm. *or.* 5. 1–2, *epist.* i. 44). The theory of Seeck, that all these letters belong exclusively to the last months of 375, has been well critiqued by Rita Lizzi Testa, who shows that references to the passing of the seasons place the letters in a period moving from summer to autumn. The dating of the letters to 375 is thus reasonably secure, although it is possible that Avianius was driven from Rome as early as autumn 374.<sup>22</sup> Seeck dated the letters to late 375 because he assumed the earthquake at Beneventum described in *epist.* i. 3. 4 was the same as that described in Zosimus iv. 18 as having occurred around the time of the death of Valentinian I (17 November 375). Scholars have

<sup>20</sup> Cameron 2011, Chapter 10.

<sup>21</sup> Salzman places l. 8 in the period 370/371–375, because a snatch of his own poetry included by Symmachus echoes Ausonius' *Mosella*, dateable to c. 370–371. But that correct *terminus post quem* is no reason not to allot it the same date as l. 5, 7, and 9–11, which should be classed as 'probably 375'.

<sup>22</sup> Lizzi Testa 2004, pp. 375–379, followed by Salzman 2015, p. 2 n. 7.

continued, sometimes hesitantly, to cite this earthquake as if potentially relevant. But it is a red herring. Zosimus' earthquake is described as doing damage in Crete and mainland Greece, and can have nothing whatever to do with an earthquake many hundreds of miles away in Campania.<sup>23</sup> Two of the letters, i. 6 and i. 12, offer no precise dating criteria. i. 6 clearly belongs before Symmachus had issue, but the date of Symmachus' daughter's birth is not known, and it need not be from an earlier period than the rest.<sup>24</sup> i. 12 refers to Symmachus' lavish refurbishment of a house at his father's instructions, and Julia Hillner has attractively suggested that the house is the one in Trastevere that had been destroyed by rioters, which would create a pleasing ring composition in the cycle.<sup>25</sup> Whether this is right or not, it can certainly be argued that, even if one or two of the letters may be from a slightly different period than the others, the dramatic date of the cycle as a whole is clearly anchored in 375.

There is no direct reference in the letters to Avianius' high offices (not even the consulate to which he had been designated when he died late in 376<sup>26</sup>): instead we see a focus on various other expressions of aristocratic identity. Uniquely in Symmachus' oeuvre, three of the letters include the author's own poetry, Symmachus' hexameters and elegiacs in i. 1, his Anacreontics in i. 8, and his father's hexameters in i. 2. The initial sequence includes the authors' excuses for the roughness of their poetry, and the recipients' enthusiastic responses. According to Symmachus' *or.* 5. 1, delivered in the senate on 9 January 376, his father had spent his absence from the city free of cares, nour-

<sup>23</sup> Seeck 1883, p. LXXIII, Callu 1972, p. 67 n. 7, Lizzi Testa 2004, p. 379, Salzman 2011, pp. 2 n. 6 and 19 n. 1, corrected in Salzman 2015. Guidoboni *et al.* 1994, p. 279, rightly see the Benevento earthquake as a local one (159 in their catalogue of earthquakes); in addition, despite the dramatic date, they apparently view the earthquake described by Zosimus as a doublet of the famous earthquake of 21 July 365 (p. 267). They are probably right to do so, given that the story of the earthquake is specifically marked by Zosimus as being an addition to his base source (Eunapius) from a hymn of the Neoplatonist Syrianus (iv. 18. 4).

<sup>24</sup> As Salzman 2015, pp. 24–25, maintains against Callu.

<sup>25</sup> Hillner 2006, p. 136.

<sup>26</sup> There is no reason to think that Avianius Symmachus was appointed consul designate unusually early in the year, as sometimes alleged: see Kelly 2013b, pp. 382 n. 101 and 393.

ishing his mind with literature: confirmation that these letters present a calculated exhibition of culture and sangfroid in the face of troubles. The subjects of the poems are also to the point: when Symmachus describes the former residents of the villa he has received from his father-in-law's estate, he not only displays literary culture but also exhibits his *pietas*, family connections, and property. His father responds in kind, and the focus of the first twelve letters is on these quintessentially aristocratic topics.

## 2.2. Ausonius

If the letters to Avianius centre around the year 375, the first of the letters to Ausonius (1. 13) places us at the start of the year 376. Following the death of Valentinian I at Brigetio in Pannonia on 17 November 375, the senate meeting on 1 January 376 almost certainly represented the first time that the new regime of Valentinian's son Gratian, based in Trier, was able to communicate with the Roman senate. Symmachus writes in panegyric mode of the pre-dawn meeting seeing the light of the new age kindled, and of the new emperor's 'heavenly speech' (*caelestis oratio*). This enthusiastic praise of Gratian's new regime was significant in a letter to Ausonius, not only as his political fortunes were so closely linked to his former pupil, under whom he himself later rose to become praetorian prefect and consul and many members of his family enjoyed preferment, but also because he was already quaestor, appointed under Valentinian,<sup>27</sup> and as such the presumed author of the heavenly speech. I have discussed the letter's subtleties elsewhere, in particular its role as a statement of loyalty in a time that was much trickier for Gratian's court than the letter implies, above all because of the recent irregular promotion to Augustus of Gratian's younger brother Valentinian II in Illyricum.<sup>28</sup> In the collection, it follows on chronologically from the letters to Avianius (and the segue was even more fitting if readers knew that 1 January was the date of Avianius' triumphant return to the Roman senate, as

<sup>27</sup> The reference books favour the term *quaestor sacri Palatii*, unattested in the fourth century, when the usual term is *quaestor intra Palatium*, or simply *quaestor*.

<sup>28</sup> Kelly 2013b, esp. pp. 377–382; also Kelly 2013a, pp. 275–278.

emerges later from *epist.* 1. 44). But it also serves well to introduce the letters to Ausonius, the bulk of which are addressed to Ausonius as office holder.

The next letter (1. 14) is a somewhat earlier one, Symmachus' famous appreciation of Ausonius' poem *Mosella*, and sets up a parallel theme of the Ausonius dossier, correspondence between men of letters. The third of the sequence (1. 15) is the first of many letters of recommendation in the book, here for the *rhetor* Palladius.<sup>29</sup> Is it coincidence that the first of these should be not only for a literary man, but for one who was conspicuously successful in politics? We learn later in the book that Palladius was summoned to Gratian's court (1. 94),<sup>30</sup> and Symmachus' contemporaries presumably knew he had become *comes sacrarum largitionum* and *magister officiorum* under Theodosius. The fourth letter (1. 16) celebrates Hesperius' promotion to proconsul of Africa in 376, anticipating his later role in the collection.<sup>31</sup> The diverse themes of the letters to Ausonius are

<sup>29</sup> On the text of this letter, see Cameron 2011, p. 537 and n. 257, citing Thraede 1968, pp. 267–269.

<sup>30</sup> The date of Palladius' summons to court is unlikely to be 379, as argued by Seeck 1883, p. CXI, *PLRE* I, s.v. 'Palladius 12', and Salzman 2015, pp. 47–48, but earlier: *epist.* 1. 15 should be dated not 'before 379' (so Callu and Salzman) or 378 or 379 (Seeck), but 'before 378'. See for further argument Section 2.8 below.

<sup>31</sup> *Epist.* 1. 16 should be assigned the date 'Probably early 376' (for when Hesperius became proconsul of Africa, see Kelly 2013b, pp. 380–381 n. 94). The letter might conceivably relate to his promotion to praetorian prefect for the first time in late 377, but as he seems to have been appointed jointly with his father, allusion to this fact would in that case be expected. There is an outside possibility that it refers to an earlier office of Hesperius' which we simply do not know of: proconsul of Africa is an unusually elevated first appointment. Callu and Salzman are unnecessarily imprecise on dating here, as often with letters that can be tied to particular offices. To run through some further examples (some corrected in Salzman 2015): 1. 17 should be addressed to Ausonius as praetorian prefect of Italy (so probably Callu's 378–379, rather than Salzman's 377–379); 1. 18 belongs to Ausonius' first appointment as praetorian prefect, so late 377 (Callu offers '376–379', Salzman '377–379'); 1. 23 is written to Ausonius when quaestor, so 374/5–377 (Callu 'before 377', Salzman 'before 375–377'); 1. 26 is likeliest to be addressed to Ausonius as prefect (*uiro in specula honorum locato*), so 377–379 (Salzman 2015), not 376–379 (Callu, Salzman 2011). Conversely, 1. 28 is written to Ausonius as either quaestor or prefect, so we cannot date it more precisely than 374/5–379, though Seeck may

thus clearly set out from the start. The second letter establishes how they met, during Symmachus' stay at Valentinian's court in 368–370<sup>32</sup> (*epist.* I. 14. 3: *novi ego istum fluvium, cum aeternorum principum iam pridem signa comitarer [...]*;<sup>33</sup> 4. *atqui in tuis mensis saepe versatus, cum pleraque alia quae tunc in praetorio erant esui obiecta mirarer, numquam hoc genus piscium deprehendi*; also alluded to by Ausonius in *epist.* I. 32. 4). As we have seen, Symmachus chose not to include the first letter he had written to Ausonius, before that visit.<sup>34</sup> And as Salzman rightly argues, there is no sign that any of the letters dates to any time after Ausonius relinquished his prefecture in late 379 – a fact which may cause disquiet to readers who have not noticed that Symmachus' *amicitia* was self-interested.<sup>35</sup> But Symmachus is in fact unashamed about the fact that his friend's office holding means power for him (for example, I. 28). Within that correspondence, there are letters exhibiting literary interests (I. 24, the gift to Ausonius of Pliny's *Natural History*; the exchange I. 31–32, in which Ausonius' reply lauds Symmachus' talents), but the majority come from Ausonius' time in office, celebrating his success and asking help for Symmachus' protégés and friends.

### 2.3. Praetextatus

The third addressee is Praetextatus, a famous figure in Rome, whose death in 384 as praetorian prefect and consul designate

have been right that it belonged shortly after one of those appointments; a similar dating of 374/5–379 should also be applied to I. 33, I. 34, I. 36, I. 39 (where Salzman has 375–379, based on the judgment that he became quaestor in 375), and I. 43 (a letter of recommendation probably written to Ausonius in office rather than otherwise; Callu and Salzman have 370–379).

<sup>32</sup> Or perhaps 369–370. Or. 1 was delivered for Valentinian's quinquennalia, 25 February 368, but conceivably the end of the anniversary year, 25 February 369; or. 2 was delivered for his third consulship on 1 January 370.

<sup>33</sup> Perhaps a clause added by Symmachus at the time of publication, as clarification for his readers?

<sup>34</sup> Above, n. 12.

<sup>35</sup> Seeck 1883 placed the letter exchange I. 31 and I. 32 after Ausonius' retirement. Salzman rightly thinks it undateable beyond belonging in the same period as the other letters to Ausonius, 370–379; more probably it belongs earlier on, before Ausonius entered public office in 374 or 375, though not during Symmachus' prefecture of Africa in 373–374.

caused public lamentation. But we learn nothing of his death or either of those honours in Book 1, and Symmachus does not celebrate Praetextatus for his administrative offices, with the consequence that most of the twelve letters are rather difficult to date precisely, and several of them are listed by scholars as from potentially any time in Symmachus' adult life before Praetextatus' death in 384.<sup>36</sup> There is a focus on a different form of public office, the pagan priesthoods which both men held, and the letters testify to the seriousness with which Symmachus regarded this duty. One striking point, however, is that the very first letter in the Praetextatus series, like the first in the Ausonius series, takes us to the start of the year 376: Symmachus enclosed the speech that he gave on the senate on 9 January, which we know as *or.* 5, *Pro Trygetio*. He hijacked his nomination of a friend's son as praetor to give thanks both for his father Avianus' recall to the senate and for Gratian's regime. He explains the situation and sends the speech to Praetextatus for comment; in *epist.* 1. 52 he thanks Praetextatus for his appreciative reply (similar letters, presumably though not certainly for the same speech, are sent to Hesperius and Syagrius, as we shall see<sup>37</sup>).

The last letter addressed to Praetextatus (*epist.* 1. 55) deserves comment, because if the date of early 384 proposed with varying degrees of tentativeness by Seeck, Callu, and Salzman is accepted, it is the last dateable letter in the book and provides a *terminus post quem* for its publication. Praetextatus has tried to

<sup>36</sup> A slight modification might be possible in the case of *epist.* 1. 47, 48, 51, and 53, where Praetextatus appears not to be in public office, giving a *terminus ante quem* of spring 384, when he became praetorian prefect. But no greater precision is possible, as Salzman rightly argues against Seeck's and Callu's guesses in one or two instances. For some letters, reference to Symmachus' father or brother as alive gives an earlier *terminus ante quem* (1. 50 before late 376; 1. 46 before 380). Symmachus' status as a pontiff in some letters gives little help for dating, since he gained it in the first half of the 360s, before his first governorship.

<sup>37</sup> Matthews 1975, p. 68 and nn. 4 and 5 suggests that *epist.* 1. 52 (to Praetextatus), 78 (to Hesperius), 96, 105 (to Syagrius), as well as III. 7 (to Julianus Rusticus) were concerned with *or.* 4, *Pro patre*, rather than *or.* 5 (explicitly referred to in 1. 44 to Praetextatus). Whatever the case, this series of letters helps to establish the literary unity of Book 1. They also point to the literary achievement for which he was best known: it has plausibly been argued that his speeches were published in the late 370s (Sogno 2006, pp. 28–30).



effect a reconciliation between Symmachus and an unidentifiable third party. Symmachus assents, but insists that the individual who created the rupture should begin the process of reconciliation *sequestrata consideratione fortunae*, 'setting aside considerations of fortune/ rank'. He then congratulates Praetextatus on the fact that his toil will serve public safety (*cuius labor saluti publicae commodabit*), though he deliberately refrains from more than brief comment on his friend's *gloria*. A favoured reading of this passage is that it refers to Praetextatus' appointment as praetorian prefect of Italy in the spring of 384. At around the same time, Symmachus himself became prefect of Rome, and it has been suggested that the other party's desire for reconciliation could relate to this appointment.<sup>38</sup> This is certainly a plausible context, but it should be remembered that although Praetextatus held no offices between 368 and 384, he is recorded in posthumous inscriptions as having served seven times as a senatorial envoy to the emperors (including, for example, to Valentinian I during the magic and adultery trials of the early 370s), and the reference could be to one of these embassies. It is true, of course, that the word *labor* could refer to high office (e.g. I. 58), but in fact on surprisingly frequent occasions Symmachus uses it precisely for senatorial embassies to the emperor.<sup>39</sup> The difference in *fortuna* between Symmachus and his former friend could refer to the latter's higher rank, rather than being anything to do with the urban prefecture.<sup>40</sup> A *non liquet* must be recorded, and the last definitively dated letter to Praetextatus remains *epist.* I. 54, written soon after the death of Symmachus' brother Titianus in 380.

#### 2.4. Petronius Probus

With Probus, the most distinguished political player among his correspondents, there is less evidence of close friendship on Symmachus' part. He receives only six letters. There are also

<sup>38</sup> Vera 1981, p. LIX n. 49, developed by Salzman 2015, pp. 114–115.

<sup>39</sup> I. 22; VII. 13; VII. 14; VII. 113; VII. 114; IX. 86. 2 (with Callu *ad loc.*).

<sup>40</sup> See again Vera 1981, p. LIX n. 49; see also Bruggisser 1993, p. 270.

good reasons to suspect that Symmachus' later relations with him were poor: as urban prefect he took action against Probus' father-in-law Olybrius; in the late 380s he was involved in a legal dispute with Probus himself, who has been plausibly identified as the distinguished Roman whose death Symmachus was unwilling to mourn in *epist.* III. 88.<sup>41</sup> As already observed, Symmachus excluded from this collection an apology for his failure to come to Trier for Probus' consular celebrations in 371, which survives without addressee as *epist.* IX. 112. The letters in Book I were all written to Probus when he held the praetorian prefecture, but are mostly hard to date beyond that fact.<sup>42</sup> *Epist.* IX. 112 has sometimes been interpreted as the first letter in the relationship, but I suspect that Symmachus' reference to the contribution that Probus has made to their *amicitia* arises from surprise at the invitation; and in any case, Symmachus had written to Probus at least once before: *epist.* I. 58 should clearly be seen as offering congratulations on the second prefecture (*in secundos labores*), that of Gaul in 366.<sup>43</sup> One letter, written to Probus in a time when the safety of the state was threatened (*epist.* I. 57), has sometimes been dated to 383 and the situation after the murder of Gratian, which would provide a *terminus post quem* for the book as a whole. But in fact the situation could well be the aftermath of the death of Valentinian I, when Probus was one of the sponsors of the irregular elevation of Valentinian II, allegedly as a bulwark against usurpation. Symmachus was a prompt supporter of Gratian's court in the crisis (see for example *epist.* I. 13), but this does not mean that he would not also have taken care to write in bland terms to a major player in the other western court.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>41</sup> Sogno 2006, p. 75; Matthews 1974, pp. 89–90.

<sup>42</sup> For example, *epist.* I. 59 is from a point when Probus was in office and Symmachus not, but that fact probably narrows the date down only to 364–373 or 374–376.

<sup>43</sup> Cameron 1985, p. 181 n. 82, contra Callu 1972, p. 117, and Salzman 2015, pp. 121–123.

<sup>44</sup> See Kelly 2013b.

## 2.5. Celsinus Titianus

Symmachus' brother died young, seemingly in late 380.<sup>45</sup> He was then vicarius of Africa, not a minor role but below the exalted ranks of the other addressees of the book. Nevertheless all but the first couple of letters focus not on familial piety but on Titianus' role as a magistrate and Symmachus' role as a supporter of the deserving: one letter begins by imagining Titianus' surprise that Symmachus is recommending a bishop (i. 64).<sup>46</sup>

## 2.6. Hesperius

The book's first mention of Hesperius had come in one of the letters to his father Ausonius (i. 16), almost certainly when he was appointed to his first major role as proconsul as Africa.<sup>47</sup> The great majority of the letters to Hesperius are clearly addressed to him in office, most probably during his praetorian prefectures (from late 377 to the spring of 380), though a couple of letters which have no function other than elegantly to renew correspondence need not be (i. 82, i. 84), and at least one, which refers to Titianus' death, almost certainly comes from late 380 or early 381, after Hesperius had demitted office (i. 83).<sup>48</sup> Hesperius is not characterised simply as an administrator but also as a litterateur in a letter enclosing a speech that Symmachus has sent to others (i. 78); the letter is usually linked to i. 44 to Praetextatus, which explicitly concerns *or.* 5 from January 376.

<sup>45</sup> This appears likely from the extant *fasti* of the vicariate of Africa, and from Symmachus' *epist.* i. 101 to Syagrius, declining to attend his consular celebrations from grief, on the almost certain assumption that Symmachus' friend Syagrius is the consul of 381 rather than his homonym of 382.

<sup>46</sup> One or two of the letters of recommendation might antedate his vicariate, as Salzman rightly notes. On *epist.* i. 64, see the opening pages of Weisweiler 2011.

<sup>47</sup> Above n. 31.

<sup>48</sup> *Epist.* i. 77, which Salzman assigns to 376-before 381 (and Callu to before 381), is almost certainly addressed to him as praetorian prefect (generally recorded by Salzman as 378-before 381; I would write '377-380'). Salzman's assumption that the correspondence began in 376 is called into question by i. 16. 2, where Symmachus complains to Ausonius about not having heard from Hesperius since his promotion, so her dating of i. 82 and i. 84 to '376-before 381' may be over-confident.

G. W. Bowersock has suggested a later date for one letter in the sequence: he dates *epist.* 1. 86, in which Symmachus is uncertain whether Hesperius is still in Milan, to 384, long after he had demitted office but when is attested as having visited Rome (*rel.* 23. 1).<sup>49</sup> This is certainly possible, and perhaps Symmachus might have been more confident that a letter would reach its destination if the recipient was praetorian prefect. But Milan was not a permanent residence of Gratian's court until 381, and for most of his prefecture Hesperius had responsibilities for Gaul as well as Italy and Africa. If Hesperius was travelling with the emperor, we know that Gratian's visits to Milan in 379 and early 380 were brief: in 379, having left Aquileia after 5 July, he is attested in Milan on 31 July and 3 August, and already on the road on 4 August; in 380 he was there on 24 April, having been in Trier on 18 March and arriving in Aquileia by 14 May.<sup>50</sup> The judgment must again be *non liquet*.

## 2.7. Antonius

At least four of the five letters to Antonius were written to him in office, either as quaestor in the first half of the 370s, or as prefect successively of Gaul and Italy in 376–378. His ongoing distinction was ensured by a likely family link to the emperor Theodosius and his consulship in 382. The first letter is clearly addressed to him as quaestor and (more directly than 1. 13 to Ausonius) praises him for his drafting of an imperial message to the senate: a fine example of the perceived overlap between literary and administrative skill.<sup>51</sup> Interestingly, nowhere is any reference made to his consulate of 382, although the book contains letters of congratulation to other consuls.

<sup>49</sup> Bowersock 1986, p. 11.

<sup>50</sup> See Barnes 1999, p. 167.

<sup>51</sup> Salzman dates the quaestorship between 370 and 375, and thus places the letter in the same period, excluding Symmachus' period as proconsul of Africa in 373–374. Exactly when Ausonius became quaestor is debated. We know that he was quaestor to Valentinian as well as Gratian; Honoré's stylistic study suggests that he was in office by 9 April 375 (1986, p. 204), while Coşkun 2002a, p. 57, dates the appointment to spring 374 on the same grounds.

## 2.8. Syagrius

The first hurdle in considering the next letters is the problem that there were consuls called Flavius Syagrius in both 381 and 382. A full review of the evidence would take many pages, so it will suffice here to say that the best reconstruction still seems that undertaken by Martindale in preparation for the *Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire*, which sees Symmachus' friend as a former *notarius*, dismissed by Valentinian in 370, *magister officiorum* under Gratian in 379, praetorian prefect of Italy from 380 until late 381 or 382, and consul in 381.<sup>52</sup> One may add that Syagrius seems to have held a court office, perhaps already as *magister officiorum*, by 378, the last likely date of the first letter in the series (i. 94) recommending the *rhetor* Palladius. Symmachus had previously lauded Palladius in *epist.* i. 16 to Ausonius; now Palladius was being summoned to court.<sup>53</sup> Symmachus also gave Palladius a letter of recommendation to Eutropius (*epist.* iii. 50) when he left Rome for the court, apparently in summer. But in summer 379 Syagrius was *magister officiorum* under Gratian, as his court moved west, and Eutropius was about to become praetorian prefect of Illyricum under Theodosius, whom Palladius was to serve as *comes sacrarum largitionum* and *magister officiorum* in the early 380s. The obvious inference is that Palladius set out for Gratian's court in sum-

<sup>52</sup> Martindale 1967; *PLRE* I, s.vv. 'Syagrius 2' and 'Syagrius 3'. Salzman's modification of this (2015, p. 170), that Syagrius is unlikely to have been praetorian prefect and consul simultaneously, is problematic because the last four non-imperial and non-military consuls had all been serving praetorian prefects: Probus in 371, Modestus in 372, Ausonius and Olybrius in 379. Her suggestion that he left his praetorian prefecture in late 380 also creates problems with the career of the other Syagrius. It should be added in defence of Martindale's reconstruction of the Syagrii's career that none of the letters shows any sign of being written to a proconsul of Africa or to a prefect of Rome, offices which one of the two Syagrii appears to have held. For references to other theories, see Pellizzari 1998, pp. 24–25.

<sup>53</sup> Contra Seeck (379), Callu (before 382), Salzman (379–382) and *PLRE* I, s.v. 'Palladius 12' (379). As a consequence i. 104, dated to 379 by Callu and Salzman because Syagrius appears to be *magister officiorum*, should be dated 'c. 379' instead; letters for which the sole dating criterion is Syagrius' office-holding should be dated c. 378–c. 382. Pellizzari 1998, pp. 181–182, explores the possibility that Palladius is identical with Palladius 19, consularis of Venetia and Histria in c. 379.

mer 378 (or earlier); and that both he and Eutropius became part of Theodosius' entourage after Gratian, willingly or not, promoted him at Sirmium in January 379; and that summer 378 is the date of the letters. We must also assume that Syagrius held a post at Gratian's court – perhaps already *magister officiorum* – by the summer of 378. Most of the letters are addressed to him in an official capacity: expressing elaborate appreciation for the honour of reading an imperial letter to the senate, in the hope that he will convey Symmachus' appreciation back in person (I. 95); a polite refusal from late 380 of the invitation to attend his inauguration as consul (I. 101); thanks for his consular gift, perhaps a diptych, early in the following year (I. 103); and many recommendations. In some letters office-holding cannot be inferred; there is a letter comparing personal blows, perhaps linked to Titianus' death (I. 100); another (undateable) promising further letters (I. 97); and two thanking him for his appreciation of a speech (I. 96) and enclosing a *libellus* of oratory (I. 105), both of which tend to be connected with one or other of his speeches of 376, *or.* 4 and 5, and with the other similar letters in the book: Syagrius, like most correspondents, is appreciated, and consistently characterized, as a literary connoisseur. Occasionally more exact datings can be made,<sup>54</sup> but the essential picture is clear, that nothing in letters to Syagrius need be later than 381.

### 3. *The Date of the Whole Book*

Above, we have seen that arguments have been made for dating some letters in the book (to Probus, Praetextatus, and Hesperius) to the years 383 or 384, but that in no case is this dating compelling. On the other hand a sizeable number of definitively dateable letters cluster in the years 380 and 381 – but none later. Along with the careful overall ordering of the correspondents, we have seen a general pattern where the first letters in each

<sup>54</sup> In *epist.* I. 102 Syagrius is in Milan having crossed the Alps; Symmachus refers to his distinction and looks forward to more frequent contact. A likely date is April 380, when Gratian's court crossed the Alps (Barnes 1999, p. 168) and around the time of Syagrius' promotion from *magister officiorum* to praetorian prefect of Italy.

group tend to characterize the addressee; there is (with exceptions) a general progression forward in time over the course of the correspondence, starting with letters to his father from 375, and then with letters to a series of important men, who are generally portrayed both as office-holders and men of letters. Certain themes are particularly dominant: Book I contains the only examples of the author's poetry and the majority of examples of covering letters for copies of speeches. Symmachus is not the Pliny of his age,<sup>55</sup> but his most Plinian letters come in this book.

When Callu suggested that Book I had been separately published, he thought that the last dateable letter was from 384, and that therefore the book had been published after Symmachus' urban prefecture of 384–385, perhaps along with the *Relationes*. If Symmachus did publish the book in his lifetime, the debate has tended to focus on precisely when after his urban prefecture would make most sense. Various factors come into play. Modern scholarship tends to view Symmachus' prefecture as stressful and not notably successful; did he need in its aftermath to restore his reputation? Alan Cameron has proposed a date in the 390s, when all of those addressed would have been dead or in permanent retirement; his inclination is to place the book relatively late on the assumption that Symmachus then turned to the arrangement of Books II to VII but was prevented from publishing them himself by his death on 402.<sup>56</sup> In favour of this position one might add the fact that earlier but not later letters to the correspondents of Book I have been identified in the books published later, VIII and IX; on the other hand, there is nothing in Book I that could have caused significant offence if those addressed were still alive. Salzman suggests that the letters were likely to have been published before the usurpation of Eugenius in 392–394, 'which raised serious political problems for his in-laws':<sup>57</sup> but the fact that the Nicomachi Flaviani go unmentioned in Book I weakens the force of this argument. The problematic relation-

<sup>55</sup> Cameron 2011, p. 360.

<sup>56</sup> Cameron 2011, pp. 368–370.

<sup>57</sup> Salzman 2015, p. LIV n. 199.

ship with Probus – usually thought to have worsened in the late 380s, shortly before Probus' death – may also be relevant.<sup>58</sup>

But if my conclusion that no letter is demonstrably later than about 381 is accepted, the possibility arises that the book was published before Symmachus became prefect of Rome in 384. And this may help us to make sense of another factor of the book: its concentration on the reign of Gratian as the senior emperor of the west. Reference to the emperor himself is not that plentiful (this is normal in Symmachus' letters), though there are prominently positioned letters which include such references to Ausonius (*epist.* 1. 13) and to Syagrius (*epist.* 1. 95); also relevant are the letters in which he spreads the word about speeches which are best identified as the loyalist *or.* 4 and 5. But it is striking quite how many of the addressees held the highest offices under Gratian, with Ausonius, Hesperius, Antonius, and Syagrius all rising to the pinnacle of praetorian prefect.<sup>59</sup> In noting the concentration on Gratian's reign, Bruggisser saw a nostalgic look back at a golden age for the senate. Cameron has retorted that the reconciliation with the senate was limited to the start of the reign: that Gratian stopped appointing Roman aristocrats to the urban prefecture in 377 and in 382 took the measures that effectively disestablished Roman paganism.<sup>60</sup> Symmachus went on a senatorial embassy to complain, and was denied an audience.<sup>61</sup> Could any pagan 'have looked back on the reign of Gratian as a golden age for the city of Rome'?<sup>62</sup> But if Symmachus was not looking back, but assembling the book while Gratian was still emperor, in 381 or the first part of 382, before his participation in the senatorial embassy of that year, his approach makes perfect sense (perhaps the publication of the book

<sup>58</sup> See Sogno 2006, p. 77. By the late 390s, however, Symmachus was on cordial terms with Probus' sons (*epist.* v. 67–71).

<sup>59</sup> To reinforce this impression we might note three contemporary praetorian prefects who appear elsewhere in the correspondence: Eutropius (iii. 46–53), who served in *c.* 380 but under Theodosius, Siburius (iii. 43–45), who served under Gratian but appears to have left office under accusation, and Gregorius (iii. 17–22), who seemingly held office at the end of Gratian's reign.

<sup>60</sup> Bruggisser 1993 *passim*, for example, pp. 411–412; Cameron 2011, p. 369.

<sup>61</sup> *Rel.* 3. 1; Ambr. *epist.* 72. 10.

<sup>62</sup> Cameron 2011, p. 369.



of letters even helped secure his membership of the embassy). This would be a Symmachus around forty years old; with a reputation as an orator and as head of one of the richest families in Rome; a man who had served as proconsul of Africa but not yet as prefect or consul. The letters show him as aristocrat and man of letters, conversing in impeccable style and on equal terms with the leading men of the senate and of the current regime, obtaining favours and sometimes honours for himself and recommending his friends and protégés.<sup>63</sup> Such a reconstruction makes sense of one of the odder features of the book, that Symmachus himself is concerned with status but never mentions his own higher offices. Consider in particular the very first letter. Although it offers no preface such as Pliny or Sidonius offered, it introduces Symmachus as aristocrat, pious son, villa owner, and amateur poet. The poems focus on former owners of his villa, including the great republican orator Hortensius; Acyndinus, praetorian prefect under Constantius II, and son of an urban prefect; and his own father-in-law, Orfitus, twice prefect of Rome. Symmachus ends the second poem by drawing attention to the fact that in his youth he has already won twelve *fascēs* (as proconsul of Africa), but that his appetite for public office remains undimmed. An obvious interpretation is that not only this programmatic letter but the whole book displays his readiness and competence for a prefecture.<sup>64</sup>

In almost exactly the same period, a man a few years younger than Symmachus, also based in Rome, may have embarked on a very similar exercise. Andrew Cain has persuasively argued that Jerome's *Epistulae ad diversos* were published while Jerome was in Rome in the early 380s and carefully presented its author as a master of learning and asceticism.<sup>65</sup> Symmachus' ambitions were very different, of course, but if Book 1 of his letters was published as early as 381 or 382, it too can be seen not as a recollection of a past period, but as carefully crafted self-advertisement by a young man on the make.

<sup>63</sup> If this point of view is accepted, Symmachus must have felt that it would do no harm to his career to display his priesthoods.

<sup>64</sup> I am grateful to John Weisweiler for inspiring this line of argument.

<sup>65</sup> Cain 2009, pp. 68–98.

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### *Abstract*

The letters of Q. Aurelius Symmachus (340/5–402) survive in 10 books. The longstanding assumption that these were all published by his son after his death has increasingly been called into question by scholars. This article looks at Book I of the letters, accepting Callu's suggestion that the book was published by Symmachus in his lifetime, as can be inferred from, inter alia, its chronologically narrow focus, important addressees, careful arrangement, and linguistic and allusive polish. Callu and others who have accepted this point believed that the latest letter in the book was from 384, the year of Symmachus' urban prefecture: surveying the dating of individual letters in the book, I argue that none is demonstrably later than 381. The book might therefore be seen as dating to 381 or 382: the self-advertisement of a young aristocrat who had not yet held the highest offices, but had the nobility, eloquence, and excellent connections to merit them.

## AMMIANUS CICERONIANUS?

In the fifth chapter of Book xxiii of his *Res Gestae* Ammianus Marcellinus reports how the emperor Julian invaded Persian territory at the head of a great expedition. This was an appropriate moment for the initiator of this ambitious enterprise to make a speech. In this comparatively long speech Julian expounds both his main objective *abolenda nobis natio molestissima*, 'our task is to wipe out a most pernicious people' (xxiii. 5. 19, trans. Hamilton), and the right strategy for achieving this result. With a view to this he provides a series of examples taken from Rome's history, which show that the Romans had invaded Persia in the past: *Traianus et Verus, Severus hinc sunt digressi victores et tropaeati*, 'Trajan and Verus and Severus came back from this country crowned with the laurels of victory' (xxiii. 5. 17, trans. Hamilton). After these examples the orator expands his survey of the past by adding references to the defeat of other enemies, such as Carthage, *Fidenae*, *Vei*. Julian moves with sovereign ease through the various phases of Rome's history.

The author's idea of letting the protagonist himself provide this survey is undeniably attractive and, moreover, not entirely at variance with the facts. As was shown by Bouffartigue 1992, pp. 436 ff. Julian took a lively interest in history. Nevertheless, the contents of the speech are definitely surprising because of an incredible absentee: Alexander the Great. One cannot imagine that an emperor imbued with the achievements of Greek culture would fail to remind his soldiers of the Macedonian king's famous expedition and its far-reaching consequences. The fact that Julian limits himself to Roman history is a good exam-

ple of the ‘Romanization of Julian’, the title of an enlightening paper written by Daniel den Hengst.<sup>1</sup> In the present text this ‘Julian in Roman dress’ is further illustrated with a small detail. Towards the end of his speech Julian explicitly mentions his familiarity with the Roman past: *haec ut antiquitatum peritus exposui* (xxiii. 5. 21). This phrase seems to have been inspired by Cicero’s *Brutus*, where *antiquitatis peritus* occurs three times: in sections 81, 205 and 267. Ammianus quotes Cicero more often than any other Roman author, in more than twenty cases explicitly with a formula in the following vein: *ut Tullius quoque docet* (xxi. 16. 13) or *Tullius quoque, testis reverendus, affirmat* (xxvi. 1. 2). There are, however, also allusions to Cicero without any mention of his name. A remarkable example will appear at the end of this paper.

This admiration for Cicero, which is manifest in the *Res Gestae*, is part of a general trend in Late Antiquity: respect for the authors of the classical era. Two brief illustrations may clarify this: 1) Macrobius’ immense adoration of Vergil: the poet was *nullius disciplinae expers* (*somn.* i. 6. 44), and also in the commentaries of Servius, e.g. *totus quidem Vergilius scientia plenus est* (*ad Aen.* vi praef.); 2) the predominant role of commentaries in the study of philosophy, which seems to consist mainly of precise exegesis of the great texts of the past. Plotinus said that all he did was to explain Plato: see *enn.* v. 1. 8. His writings had acquired a well nigh sacred status. Of course, convictions of this sort do not imply the absence of changes and innovations, but the fact that a treasure-trove of material of great value was readily available was comforting. It is justified to suppose that this applies to the contents as well as the form. In any case, Ammianus is clearly impressed with Cicero’s style and choice of words. He is not only a competent historian of *res*, but also *antiquitatis peritus* in a literary sense.

<sup>1</sup> Den Hengst 2010, pp. 219–229. If a reader wishes to read a passage of the *Res Gestae* in which Ammianus presents a fully Greek Julian, (s)he should read sections 15–23 of chapter 3, Book xxv. These sections are very important for Ammianus’ interpretation of Julian’s fundamental convictions: they contain his deathbed speech, an example of a person’s *ultima verba*, to which the Ancients attached great importance.

However, when reading the *Res Gestae* one immediately notices that the author does not write according to the rules and customs of classical prose in the age of Cicero: transparent sentences which together form well-shaped periods, comparable to architectonic structures, in which details, however important, remain subordinated to the construction as a whole. For clarity's sake this is stated in a somewhat exaggerated way, but when an experienced reader of Cicero and other classical prose writers opens an edition of the *Res Gestae*, he becomes acquainted with a style which is clearly different. He is now reading a text, which certainly testifies to the erudition of its author but has obviously not been written in Ciceronian Latin. Of course, he will come across many similarities: in many respects Ammianus' Latin follows the traditional grammatical rules, but a reader who has, so to speak, not yet been initiated, will find all sorts of surprising details and sentence patterns. Even after becoming used to this non-classical style, this reader will find it difficult to pinpoint precisely the characteristics of Ammianus' prose. In his well-known *Die antike Kunstprosa*, the first edition of which was published in 1898, Eduard Norden devotes five pages to the *Res Gestae*, beginning with words of praise: 'Wer auch nur, wie ich selbst, ein paar Bücher Ammians gelesen hat, ist von der Frische der Darstellung, von der Kunst des Charakterisierens, [...] von der starken Subjektivität in Haß (Constantius) und Liebe (Iulian) aufs angenehmste berührt', but also a wholly different judgment: 'Der Stil im ganzen betrachtet ist der Mode gemäß hochpathetisch', the reader 'merkt allenthalben die Einflüsse der Deklamatorenschule. Demgemäß ist die Stilisierung fast durchweg von einem ganz unträglichen Schwulst'.<sup>2</sup> On the one hand such impressionistic judgments reveal their origin in the normative status of classical culture when it comes to assessing the writings of late antique authors, but on the other such assessments concern characteristics which still invite the experts to give an explicit analysis of the specific nature of this style.

Over the course of time, various studies of aspects and details of Ammianus' use of the Latin language have been published<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Norden 1974, pp. 646, 647.

<sup>3</sup> Some older Swedish studies are very helpful: Hagendahl 1921 and 1924, Blomgren 1937.

and these have gradually created a treasure-trove of all sorts of linguistic data, which are quite helpful for commentators and translators, and also for other scholars who depend on a precise interpretation of the historian's text. A full modern description of his language is not available, but a number of studies by the famous French scholar Jacques Fontaine offer both material and inspiration for a further linguistic analysis. In a collection of articles published thirty-six years ago, Fontaine compares Ammianus and Ambrose, because both have a dual linguistic culture – Greek and Latin – and are personally involved in the contents of their writings. But Fontaine's verdict on the formal aspects of their writings is even more interesting: 'l'esthétique du sublime; le modernisme d'une écriture raffinée, brillante et ornée comme celle de la poésie; les renouvellements du goût archaïsant et de la seconde sophistication; enfin les contorsions du maniérisme d'Apulée et de ce baroque de l'âge des Sévères'.<sup>4</sup> What is most striking about this verdict is the presence of the characteristics of poetry, and of mannerism and baroque, both of which express here that the language itself makes its presence clearly felt and wants to be seen and heard. Some twenty years later, Fontaine returns to the 'style singulier et controversé d'Ammien' and notes a growing consensus about this style 'pour le qualifier de baroque'.<sup>5</sup> Evidently the 'baroque' concept has become an heuristic instrument for understanding the formal aspects of the *Res Gestae*. This is by no means an easy task, because according to Fontaine 'le style d'Ammien parvient encore à concilier difficilement les valeurs opposées du baroque et d'un certain néo-classicisme'.<sup>6</sup> Fontaine explains this internal contradiction as being eclectic due to the fact that Ammianus' Greek culture is combined with a remarkable familiarity with the Latin language and literature of the classical period. Ammianus was a native speaker of Greek and this fact has over the course of time given rise to the assumption that there are many Graecisms in his language. Eduard Norden was convinced of this: 'Es gibt außer Tertullian keinen lateinischen Schriftsteller, der in dieser Weise

<sup>4</sup> Fontaine 1977, p. 455.

<sup>5</sup> Fontaine 1992, p. 27.

<sup>6</sup> Fontaine 1992, p. 36.



gräzisierte'.<sup>7</sup> Making such an observation is much easier than proving it, specifically in the case of an author with a solid knowledge of the literary Latin language, which in the course of its development had absorbed quite a few Graecisms. There is no further discussion of this aspect in the present paper.<sup>8</sup>

A fundamental principle in Fontaine's contributions to the study of the language and literature of Late Antiquity is the unity of the linguistic and stylistic features of all writings in that period from an esthetic point of view. In this respect there is no difference between Christian and pagan literature. There are no typically Christian or pagan esthetic codes. For instance, although a comparison between Ambrose and Ammianus reveals their totally different religious convictions, it does not show a marked difference in their language. This principle is also manifest in a study of the poetry of Late Antiquity, written by the American scholar Michael Roberts with the programmatic title *The Jeweled Style*.<sup>9</sup> The author advocates a likeness between 'the jeweler's art and the work of the poet, with his skill in arranging elements of the text, variously termed flowers or jewels, so as to highlight their brilliance and setting' (thus the reviewer McDonough 1991, p. 273). Roberts' book received a scathing review from J. B. Hall, the well-known editor of Claudian, but Fontaine gave it an essentially positive assessment.<sup>10</sup> Here these details serve only to introduce an interesting paper written by Roberts on narrative in the literature of Late Antiquity.<sup>11</sup> The author analyzes inter alia a brief passage in the tenth chapter of Book xvi of the *Res Gestae*, the famous description of the emperor Constantius II's visit to Rome in the year 357. This description contains a series of salient scenes during the emperor's tour of the city. These scenes are, so to speak, independent, drawing the reader's attention to them in a way which is comparable to the characteristics of an *ecphrasis*. An author of the classical period would have allotted a more subordinate role to such scenes.

<sup>7</sup> Norden 1974, p. 648.

<sup>8</sup> See also Den Boeft 1992. Some readers overlook the question mark in the title, which indicates a problem, not a statement.

<sup>9</sup> Roberts 1989.

<sup>10</sup> Fontaine 1990; Hall 1991.

<sup>11</sup> Roberts 1988.

Put in technical terms, hypotaxis rather than parataxis would have prevailed. Of course, such attempts to get a grip on the difference between the classical and late antique styles are tentative, but they do add to our understanding. What Roberts has tried to pinpoint is akin to Fontaine's predilection for the term 'baroque'. It is a style of writing in which the language draws the reader's attention to itself.

After this brief summary of general ideas about the Late Antique literary style it is time to deal succinctly with three notable characteristics of Ammianus' language: the figure of speech hyperbole, the detailed description of horrible scenes of torture, and the lavish use of the genitive.

### 1. *Hyperbole*

This is a stylistic device which was often used in Antiquity. Quintilian's concise definition hits the mark: *decens veri superiectio*, 'an appropriate exaggeration of the truth' (*inst.* VIII. 6. 67, trans. Russell). The adjective *decens* is essential; it expresses the risk one takes with a hyperbole: it can run riot. Generally speaking, Ammianus uses this stylistic device with due wariness, but especially concerning one of his 'bêtes noires' he makes ample use of it. A very clear example can be found in the first chapter of Book xxviii of the *Res Gestae*. In this chapter the *vicarius urbis Romae* Maximinus is the protagonist in a series of criminal proceedings against Roman aristocrats and their subordinates. He is *obscurissime natus* (xxviii. 1. 5), which for the historian predicts unpleasant problems. The entire chapter has a hyperbolic character. The horrible protagonist behaves like a serpent or a wild beast in the amphitheatre. Ammianus has a passion for comparisons with animals. Remarkably, the author is not blind to the risks of exaggeration, as is shown in the fourth section of the first chapter. In the second section he had stated that an incident which had taken place long ago had frightened him. Now he describes that incident. After a siege, the city of Miletus had been captured and plundered by the Persians. Since Miletus had been founded by Athens and was much loved by the Athenians, this had caused considerable distress in Athens. Then this passage follows:

Hoc argumentum paulo postea digestum tumore tragico Phrynichus in theatrum induxerat Athenarum paulisperque iucunde auditus, cum coturnatius stilus procederet lacrimosus, indignatione damnatus est populi

[Soon afterwards Phrynichus used this disaster as the plot of a tragedy and produced it on the stage at Athens. At first it was well received by the audience, but as the sad story unfolded in high tragic style, their indignation was aroused and they punished the author] (xxviii. 1. 4, trans. Hamilton).

Obviously, according to this version of events the theatre spectators appreciated the usual tragic style (*digestum tumore tragico*) but not its exaggeration (*coturnatius*). The parallel with Ammianus is clear: he too had chosen a hyperbolic style for his report on the unending series of lawsuits in which injustice reigned. He feared that his readers might react like Phrynichus' spectators.

## 2. *Explicit Description of Atrocities*

Ancient historians pay considerable attention to military operations, and above all to pitched battles.<sup>12</sup> As is to be expected, atrocities often abound in the descriptions. The victims were numerous; many died on the battlefield itself, whereas others were ruthlessly slaughtered when they tried to flee. There is, however, another area where atrocities appear, viz. the tortures and punishments which took place within the scope of lawsuits. Detailed descriptions can be found in a typical Christian genre of texts, the *Passiones* of the Christian martyrs, from the gruesome events in Lyons – reported by the local churches to their brethren in Asia in a letter, incorporated by Eusebius in his *Historia Ecclesiastica*, v. 1.3–2.7 – until Late Antiquity. As has been shown by Delehay in his seminal study, the majority of these *Passiones* contains little or no reliable information about what actually happened, but the function of these texts is more important for the present purpose. Intended readers could learn the strength of real Christian faith and devotion from the graphic representation of the martyrs' physical suffering. These typically Christian texts were necessary for a religion in which from the

<sup>12</sup> See Bitter 1976.

very beginning suffering was an indispensable element. A curious ‘indirect’ *specimen* can be found in Jerome’s first letter.

Detailed descriptions of torture are not numerous in ancient historiography, but the *Res Gestae* do contain some examples. In the first chapter of Book xxix Ammianus allots significant space to horrible details, such as *fodicatis lateribus*, ‘when their sides had been furrowed’ (xxix. 1. 28, trans. Rolfe) and *unguibus male mulcati separantur exanimis*, ‘both were terribly torn by the hooks of the torturers and taken away senseless’ (xxix. 1. 33, trans. Rolfe). The reader is also present in the room in which the tortures took place:

resultabant omnia truculentae vocis horribus, inter catenarum sonitus: ‘tene, claude, comprime, abde’ ministris officiorum tristium clamitantibus

[the whole place echoed with the horrible cries of a savage voice, as those who did the awful work shouted amid the clanking of chains: ‘Hold him; clamp; tighten; away with him’] (xxix. 1. 23, trans. Rolfe).

Such descriptions are unfortunately realistic; we should not forget that in such circumstances the inviolability of the human body had no value at all. The methods and instruments of torture and punishment were numerous. The large lemma ‘Folterwerkzeuge’ takes thirty columns in RAC (Vergote 1972) and pictures of *venationes* and other punishments illustrate the appalling cruelty.

Ammianus’ objective with such descriptions is, of course, totally different from the function of the Christian *Passiones*. These functioned as *Gebrauchsliteratur* in the Christian communities, keeping alive the remembrance of the local saints, who had shown the hundredfold harvest in the parable of the sower (Mt 13. 3–9). Ammianus, however, wants to illustrate the cruel and ruthless injustice of those in power. This objective is akin to that of hyperbole. In both cases we encounter the very opposite of understatement, by which the author attempts to leave the reader no room for a personal judgment of people and events, and to practically force him to accept the historian’s assessment.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup> I owe this observation to Daniel den Hengst, who recently published a Dutch translation of the *Res Gestae* (Amsterdam 2013).

### 3. The Genitive

In comparison to the other *casus* of the Latin language the genitive has only a minor role in the syntactic structure of the sentence. There are some verbs which have a complement in the genitive: *miseremini sociorum* (Cic. *Verr.* II. 1. 72), *accusatus est proditionis* (Nep. *Milt.* 7. 5), and in a certain sense *tantae molis erat Romanam condere gentem* (Verg. *Aen.* I. 33), but the genitive figures far more often in brief combinations, mostly of nouns: *hortatu principis*, *domus patris*. The reader has to interpret the genitive in such combinations. This is very easy in the two examples above, but the task can also be quite complicated. A case in point is *sunt lacrimae rerum* (Verg. *Aen.* I. 462). Obviously the genitive *rerum* indicates a relationship between *lacrimae* and *rerum*, but it is not immediately clear which one. Austin ad loc. regards *rerum* as a *genitivus obiectivus*, but why not rather *possessivus*, for instance: tears belong to reality? Another example is a phrase of Ambrose concerning his ‘Arian’ adversaries: *Hymnorum quoque meorum carminibus deceptum populum ferunt* (ep. 75a. 34), ‘They say that the Christian congregation has been bewitched by my *hymnorum carminibus*’. The bishop plays with the two senses of *carmen*, ‘magical formula’ and ‘religious song’, but how should the genitive *hymnorum* be explained? As a *possessivus*: ‘the *carmina*, which intrinsically belong to the hymns’? Or rather as a *genitivus identitatis* or *inhaerentiae*? Such a problem is not merely a case of hair-splitting, it has to be solved by a commentator. A reader is free to continue his reading of the text without solving all problems but the commentator’s task is to assist the reader.

Some examples of Ammianus’ lavish use of the genitive:

- *genitivus identitatis* or *inhaerentiae*: *stabilem domicilii sedem* (xxii. 8. 25), *caerimoniarum ritus* (xxii. 12. 7), *roboris firmamentum* (xxiv. 1. 2), *fines [...] limitum* (xxv. 6. 11), *has calliditatis argutias* (xxvi. 9. 3), *neglegentiae tanta est caries* (xxviii. 4. 31). In these cases two synonyms are joined together by the genitive. See also Hagendahl 1924, pp. 192 ff.
- *genitivus inversus*: this clearly differs from the *genitivus identitatis*, as a simple example in Tertullian may show: *caecitate odii* (apol. 3. 3). Here a noun takes the place of the adjective *caecus*: instead of *caeco odio* we find *caecitate odii*. There are examples

of this in classical Latin, but ‘in solchen Verbindungen schwelgt die barocke spätere Sprache’ (Hofmann – Szantyr 1965, p. 152). The ‘official’ name is *genitivus inversus*.<sup>14</sup> The *Res Gestae* contain numerous examples. The various instances in Books xx–xxix can be found in Section III (*Syntax and Style*) of the Indices in the respective volumes of the ‘Dutch’ commentary. Some examples: *quos periculi disiecerat magnitudo* (xx. 6. 7), *inchoatas negotiorum magnitudines* (xxiv. 3. 9), *propugnaculorum firmitate muniebatur* (xxiv.4.10), *ut rerum angustiae permiserunt* (xxv. 6. 4), *vexatus acerbitate morborum* (xxviii. 6. 16).

A useful advantage is the possibility to add an adjective to the other noun of the combination: *maximae celsitudines montium* (xxiii. 6. 28), *longa morborum asperitate* (xxv. 3. 19), *hac perniciosiora verborum...assiduitate* (xxv. 7. 11), *iustisque veritatis suffragiis* (xxvii. 9. 9). In this way the author can avoid less elegant phrases such as *suffragiis veris et iustis* or *morbis asperis et longis*. The *genitivus inversus* is a typical non-classical aspect of Late Latin with an ornamental character. Can its frequency in Late Latin be regarded as a sign of the relative ‘independence’ of individual details?

To conclude this brief survey: the historian Ammianus Marcellinus was *antiquitatis peritus*, not only where political, military and geographical history was concerned but he was also well-read in Roman literature, not in the least from the classical period. He wrote, however, in a clearly different style. In defining this style, scholars tend to use the term ‘baroque’ and point to the relative independence of detailed scenes, to which the author pays great attention.

Finally, I have to fulfill the promise of a most remarkable allusion to Cicero without his name being mentioned: *Maximus ille philosophus, vir ingenti nomine doctrinarum, cuius ex uberrimis sermonibus ad scientiam copiosus Iulianus exstitit imperator*, ‘Maximus, a famous philosopher with a great reputation for learning, from whose fruitful discourses the emperor Julian acquired such a store of knowledge’ (xxix. 1. 42, trans. Hamilton) is a clear allusion to *huius (scil. Socrates) ex uberrimis sermonibus exstiterunt*

<sup>14</sup> The term was introduced by Schrijnen – Mohrmann 1936, I, p. 86: ‘Wir haben also mit einer Inversion der Funktionen zu tun, weshalb wir für diesen Genetiv den Namen Genetivus inversus vorschlagen möchten’.

*doctissimi viri* (Cic. *Brut.* 31). This allusion illustrates Ammianus' position in a cultural sense: he uses the words of a Roman icon to characterize a Greek intellectual who is compared to a Greek icon, Socrates.

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### *Abstract*

The historian Ammianus Marcellinus was a native speaker of Greek, but he wrote his *Res Gestae* in Latin, showing a remarkable familiarity with Latin literature, in particular with its classical period. Judging by his explicit references and his allusions, he admired Cicero's writings, but his own style undoubtedly differs from Cicero's classical language and is an example of late Latin esthetics.



## EMPERORS' PHYSIOGNOMY

The subject of my paper is some descriptions of emperors in the work of Ammianus Marcellinus, characterized by being conceived and structured according to physiognomy i.e. that famous ancient pseudoscience that moralistically relates characters to physical details and shows close parallelisms between men and animals.

We know that the doctrines of the physiognomists were familiar to Ammianus, because he talks about books *quorum lectio per corporum signa pandit animorum interna* (xv. 8. 16), and this familiarity seems to have created in him a sort of *forma mentis* by which every element in his prose is capable of moral(istic) interpretation. Apart from what had already been codified by this tradition, in Ammianus' text even literary and lexical elements, derived from rhetoric or satire, confront us with the historian's judgment.<sup>1</sup>

I will not discuss the reliability of his *Res Gestae* as a source for the history of the fourth century, but will focus on his method of composition and his language.

The presence of descriptions of physical and gestural details in Ammianus' work has already been studied by Elizabeth Evans, who pointed out the importance of a physiognomical substrate in the descriptions of characters. A noteworthy contribution to the literary analysis of methods of character portrayal has been

<sup>1</sup> For the importance of this tradition for Ammianus see Sabbah 1978, pp. 426–428. Physiognomic treatises are quoted in the following editions: André 1981; Hett 1955; Förster 1893.

given by Antonio Salemme in 1989.<sup>2</sup> I will follow these two models, focusing on the methods and aims of the descriptions of some emperors in Ammianus' work.<sup>3</sup>

The necrologies that Ammianus puts as a seal at the death of each emperor are the key passages with such elements: in them the person is characterized according to his vices and virtues, and physical appearance. To this static information we should then add the dynamic elements, spread in Ammianus' history, where we see individuals in action.

Let us start by considering Constantius II, a substantially negative figure in Ammianus' view. We find his portrait in *xxi. 16. 19*:

figura tali situque membrorum: subniger, luce oculorum edita, cernensque acutum, molli capillo, rasis assidue genis lucentibus ad decorem, ad usque pubem ab ipsis colli confiniis longior, brevissimis cruribus et incurvis, unde saltu valebat et cursu.

Every element Ammianus gives his reader can be interpreted under the guidance of physiognomy. A dark skin means cowardice: see *pseud.-Arist. 812b* ἡ γὰρ ἄγαν μελανὴ χροῖα ἐφάνη δειλίαν σημαίνουσα; and *Anon. de phys. 79* *color niger levem, imbellem, timidum, versutum indicat*; as it gets lighter, it seems to reveal a tendency to wrath, loquacity and voracity: see *Polemon, p. 244 Förster* (*si flavum ad nigredinem vergens vides sine morbo, id timiditatem voracitatem loquelaе multitudinem iracundiam et diuturnam linguam designat*) and *Adamantius, p. 386 Förster* (τὸ δὲ μελάγχλωρον καλούμενον χρώμα δειλόν, γαστρίμαργον, ἄλλον, ὀργίλον, γλώσσαλον).<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Evans 1935 and 1969; Salemme 1989. See also Pauw 1977 and 1979.

<sup>3</sup> I will not take into account the case of the emperor Julian the Apostate, because his portrait has already been analysed with reference to physiognomy by De Biasi 1990. For Julian see also Asmus 1906 (on which see Evans 1935, pp. 72–74).

<sup>4</sup> The two chapters of Polemon and Adamantius quoted here have been alleged by Evans 1935, p. 82, to explain *subniger*. Actually it is questionable that a μελάγχλωρος complexion might correspond to a *subniger* one, because the occurrences of the Latin adjective in physiognomical treatises match with different Greek words: see, for example, *Anon. de phys. 5 oculi* [...] *subnigri, quos Graeci χαροπούς vocant*; 14 *capilli subnigri, quos Graeci οἰνωπούς dicunt*; but especially 6 *color candidus vel cum pallore nigrior, quem Graeci «μελάγχλωρον» vocant, pupillae, quas Graeci «κόρας» dicunt, subnigrae vel evidenter nigrae*, and 88 *color autem calidus niger*

Bright eyes are generally meant as a positive sign, unless something is added:<sup>5</sup> Constantius' eyes are also sharp-sighted (*luce oculorum edita, cernensque acutum*), and this, for Polemon,<sup>6</sup> denotes *pudicitia* at a lower degree, while according to *Anon. de phys.* 35–36 sharp-sighted eyes are bad and a sign of temerity, madness and suspiciousness.<sup>7</sup> So, with an apparently positive attribute, Ammianus in fact presents Constantius as a timid and suspicious man.

The softness of his hair (*molli capillo*) reveals his weakness: see pseud.-Arist. 806b τὰ δὲ τριχώματα τὰ μὲν μαλακὰ δειλόν; and Polemon p. 248 Förster *capillus mollis e signis mulierum est*.

The fact that Constantius used to shave his cheeks so that they were neat and shining (*rasis adsidue genis lucentibus ad decorem*) shows the emperor's desire to appear as a courageous man,<sup>8</sup> as testified by *Anon. de phys.*<sup>9</sup>

As for his short and curved legs (*brevissimis cruribus et incurvis*), we see that they are a sign of scarce readiness,<sup>10</sup> which reminds us of the emperor's *ingenium obtunsum* in *xxi. 16. 4*. For short legs, Evans suggested a comparison with *Anon. de phys.* 125: the goose is audacious, lazy, vain and noisy.<sup>11</sup> I do not think that

*est, subniger, ignitus, rubeus, color frigidus albus est, medius inter nigrum et pallidum, quem Graeci μελάγχλωρον vocant, habetur*. In these latter cases it is clear that the Greek and Latin adjectives refer to two different shades of colour. Μελάγχλωρος seems related to a greenish colour (see also *Anon. de phys.* 79 *cum fuscior color pallori permixtus est, quod Graeci μελάγχλωρον vocant*), and is often used as synonym of μελίχλωρος; see Lorenzoni 1989 and 1994.

<sup>5</sup> *Anon. de phys.* 34 *oculi caligine obsiti malis artibus imbuti sunt, infideles, intemperantes. Unde intelligendum est optimos esse contrarios, id est perlucidos oculos, si nulum extat aliud indicium quod impugnet*.

<sup>6</sup> See Polemon, p. 160 Förster *ubi oculus apertus est habetque coruscationem qualem marmor habet, acie acuta, parum pudicitiae indicat*.

<sup>7</sup> *Anon. de phys.* 35–36 *lumen autem <non> ita bonum est, si corusci sint. Oculi autem corusci si quidem glauci sint et saabus hominem declarant*.

<sup>8</sup> Evans 1935, p. 82 says nothing about cheeks. *Lucere* with reference to cheeks is only in *Sen. Herc. fur.* 767 *concavae lucent genae* (of Charon).

<sup>9</sup> See *Anon. de phys.* 84 *idem dicit animosos esse eos quorum post primam iuventutem genae quodammodo duriores et nudae sunt*.

<sup>10</sup> See *Anon. de phys.* 86 *Aristoteles dicit sensibus esse eos tardiores quorum crura incurva sunt*.

<sup>11</sup> *Anon. de phys.* 125 *anser animal est audax, pigrum, inane, clamosum. qui ad huius animalis speciem referuntur homines erunt latis pedibus, cruribus brevibus* (cf. Evans 1935, p. 82). Evans' survey, very accurate indeed, seems in this case

Constantius possesses characteristics typical of the goose; I would rather propose that the note on the shortness of the emperor's legs is an indication of a lack of bodily proportion: we know that according to physiognomy the perfection of the body consists of the harmony of its parts, and adequate proportions can be only the golden mean, since this pseudo-science arose from the Aristotelian school.<sup>12</sup> Ammianus had already pointed out the excessive lengthiness of Constantius' trunk (*ad usque pubem ab ipsis colli confiniis longior*);<sup>13</sup> so this physical characteristic of the emperor, possibly even realistic, ends his portrait, denying him any chance to be virtuous and indeed adding a comment that savours of irony: *unde saltu valebat et cursu*.

As a matter of fact, all these elements confirm the substantially negative judgment that Ammianus passes on Constantius.

I would like to turn back to one side of Constantius' character, mainly to his being suspicious. In xiv. 5. 2 Ammianus said that 'as an ailing body is apt to be affected even by slight annoyances, so his narrow and sensitive mind [thought] that every sound indicated something done or planned at the expense of his safety':<sup>14</sup>

utque aegrum corpus quassari etiam levibus solet offensis,  
ita animus eius (scil. Constantii) angustus et tener, quidquid  
increpisset, ad salutis suae dispendium existimans factum  
aut cogitatum.

The comparison of a person with an ailing body is noteworthy, because it is used with reference to Constantius to portray his suspicious and timid nature concretely.

limited to a lexical coincidence, which is not reflected in the emperor's nature. As well as for cheeks, for bodily harmony she does not offer any comparison with physiognomic material.

<sup>12</sup> See Evans 1935, pp. 63–65. For the definition of virtue as the desirable middle between two extremes see Arist. *Eth. Nicom.* 1106a–b.

<sup>13</sup> Physiognomy does not express anything about the distance between the neck and pubes, but dwells upon the distance between the neck and the bottom of the breast, and between the bottom of the breast and the navel, declaring that if the former is greater, it is a sign of wisdom, while if the latter is greater, it is an indicator of voracity. See for example *Anon. de phys.* 63.

<sup>14</sup> Rolfe 1932–1936, I, p. 29.

Apart from the fact that such a comparison could be traced back to the Senecan *De ira* in which we find similar imagery,<sup>15</sup> the noteworthy element, strictly connected to the suspicious nature of Constantius, is his *patulae aures*, an object of criticism for Ammianus, that according to physiognomy can be significant as a characterization device.

This appears eight times, more or less explicitly: see in order xiv. 11. 4 *cum haec taliaque sollicitas eius aures everberarent, expositas semper eius modi rumoribus et patentes*; xv. 2. 2 *ad suscipiendas defensiones aequas et probabiles, imperatoris aures oclusae, patebant susurris insidiantium clandestinis*; xv. 3. 5 *patulis imperatoris auribus*; xvi. 7. 1 *auribus Augusti [...] in omne patentibus crimen*; xviii. 3. 6 *Augusti patulis auribus*; xviii. 4. 4 *principis aures nimium patulas*; xix. 12. 5 (*ut erat angusti pectoris*) *obsurdescens in aliis etiam nimium seriis, in hoc titulo ima (quod aiunt) auricula mollior, et suspicax et minutus, acri felle concaluit*; xxii. 11. 5 *patulas aures Constantii*.

As far as I can see, scholars have never paid any stylistic or literary attention to this physical feature, that Ammianus uses to indicate Constantius' 'impressionability' in a figurative sense.<sup>16</sup>

Constantius' ears are mentioned in almost every book, as a sort of 'formulary expression', and icastically allude to his suspicious and mistrusting nature.<sup>17</sup> Nonetheless, we should note their absence in Book xxi, where we find his necrology. Hence we could deduce that physical data, diffused by Ammianus throughout his narrative for their plastic evidence, cannot enter the final summary except to the extent of what characterizes men outwardly. But ears are a precise hint of *non-verbal communication*, since they immediately provide what had to be Constantius' reaction when confronted by his interlocutors. Perhaps the absence of non-verbal elements in the necrologies can be explained by their nature, for they play a major part in

<sup>15</sup> See Sen. *ira* i. 20. 3 *iracundia nihil amplum decorumque molitur, contra mihi videtur, vetemosi et infelicis animi imbecillitatis sibi conscia, saepe indolescere, ut exulcerata et aegra corpora quae ad tactus levissimos gement*; or iii. 9. 5 *ut ulcera ad levem tactum, deinde etiam ad suspicionem tactus condolescunt, ita animus affectus minimis offenditur*. Ammianus has borrowed many images and hints from this Senecan work. Here we find the evidence of an image, which is characteristic of the wrathful man, and fits well with the angry Constantius.

<sup>16</sup> Baglivi 1995, p. 119.

<sup>17</sup> See Newbold 1990, pp. 189–199. See also Sabbah 1978, p. 438.

the dynamic phases while they have little or no place in rigid and crystallized structures like epilogues.

The use of the adjective *patulus* and the verb *pateo*, with reference to ears, is in a figurative sense;<sup>18</sup> *patulus* is quite rare and has previous occurrences only in Horace;<sup>19</sup> *pateo* is more frequent, mainly connected to the *insidiae*, even if with no explicit mention of the ears;<sup>20</sup> we find it, for example, in Cicero and Curtius Rufus.<sup>21</sup> From this usage are derived other similar expressions of Ammianus, such as those in xv. 3. 3 *recluso pectore patebat insidiantibus multis*; and in xx. 2. 2 *insidiantibus patens*, both related to Constantius.<sup>22</sup>

On the same grounds as xvi. 7. 1 (*auribus Augusti [...] in omne patentibus crimen*) also Valentinian will be judged (xxvi. 10. 12) *imperator enim promptior ad nocendum, criminantibus patens*; and Valens (xxxi. 14. 6) *criminantibus, sine differentia veri vel falsi, facillime patens*.<sup>23</sup>

And in the same way, the negative judgement expressed in xix. 12. 5 with the verb *obsurdescere* (*obsurdescens in aliis etiam nimium seriis*) will apply to Valentinian, who in xxx. 9. 1 is deaf to the faults of high officers (*potiorum ducum flagitia progredi sinebat in maius, ad querellas in eos motas aliquotiens obsurdescens*).

Again in xix. 12. 5, as a remark on Constantius' partiality in paying attention, we find an idiom (*ima [quod aiunt] auricula*

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Servius, *ed.* 1. 1 *patulum dicimus quod patet naturaliter, ut nares, arbor; patens vero est quod et aperitur et clauditur, ut ostium, oculi*.

<sup>19</sup> Horace, *epist.* i. 18. 69–70 *percontatorem fugito; nam garrulus idem est, / nec retinent patulae commissa fideliter aures*; and *epist.* ii. 2. 104–105 *idem, finitis studiis et mente recepta, / obturem patulas impune legentibus auris*.

<sup>20</sup> It is worth remembering that Cicero, talking about the five senses, described the nose and ears in this way (*Tusc.* i. 47): *foramina illa quae patent ad animum a corpore*.

<sup>21</sup> Cic. *Phil.* 14. 20 *measque aures dies noctesque omnium praeceptis monitisque patuisse*; Curt. iv. 10. 17 (*auris*) *patere vel unius insidii regem*.

<sup>22</sup> See also xiv. 9. 2 *aemulis consarcinantibus insidias graves apud Constantium, cetera medium principem, sed siquid auribus eius huius modi quivis infudisset ignotus, acerbum et implacabilem*.

<sup>23</sup> I think that Ammianus was well acquainted with Seneca's lesson of *ira* ii. 22. 3–4 *ne sint aures criminantibus faciles: hoc humanae naturae vitium suspectum notumque nobis sit quod quae inviti audimus libenter credimus et antequam iudicemus irascimur. quid quod non criminationibus tantum, sed suspicionibus impellimur et ex vultu risuque alieno peiora interpretati innocentibus irascimur?*

*mollior*).<sup>24</sup> It seems to indicate the very proverbiality of the emperor's vice, who in xv. 3. 9, with a variation on the theme, is described as *ad suspiciones huius modi mollem et penetrabilem*. Here the characteristic of the ear is directly referred to his nature. According to the lesson of Seneca, to be penetrable in one's soul is an indication of foolishness, since it is the opposite to the behaviour of the wise man: see *const.* 3. 5 *sapientem nulli esse iniuriae obnoxium. itaque non refert quam multa in illum coniciantur tela, cum sit nulli penetrabilis*; and *ira* iii. 5. 8 *quanto pulchrius velut nulli penetrabilem telo omnis iniurias contumeliasque respuere!* It is not precisely a matter of physiognomy, but we could say that this pseudoscience gave Ammianus a key to both interpret the physical details of historical characters through all the expressive means available to him, and give their moral qualities plastic evidence.

We should add that in most cases the insistence on the feature of the *patulae aures* is strictly interrelated to the voices of individuals who talk to the emperor Constantius each time: in xiv. 11. 4, xv. 2. 2, xv. 3. 3, xviii. 4. 4 and xx. 2. 2 the calumnious speeches are delivered by the court eunuchs with their soft, flattering and effeminate voices, while in xv. 3. 5 the spy is the '*clam mordax canis*' Mercurius, the *comes somniorum*; in xvi. 7. 1 the '*strepens et tumultuans*' *magister equitum* Marcellus; in xviii. 3. 6 the garrulous *magister peditum* Barbatio; and it is not by mere chance that almost all the accusations are addressed to two men who were dear to Ammianus, namely Julian and Ursicinus (xvi. 7. 1, xviii. 3. 6 and xiv. 11. 4, xv. 2. 2, xviii. 4. 4, xx. 2. 2 respectively).

The second case, and second subject of my analysis, is Valentinian, an emperor to whom Ammianus is hostile, perhaps because Valentinian was far from Julian the Apostate's ideals, and had restored a Christian empire after the latter's brief re-establishment of paganism.

<sup>24</sup> See Cic. *ad. Q. fr.* ii. 15. 4 *me [...] et esse et fore oricula infima scito molliorem*; Hor. *sat.* ii. 5. 32–33 *gaudent prae nomine molles / auriculae*. Horace refers to slaves recently freed, a new condition which involves the acquisition of a *praenomen*. Thus they are pleased by their new designation, which reminds them of their recent freedom.

Valentinian's savage personality and fierce cruelty are often pointed out in the *Res Gestae*. For him, both the adjective *ferus* and the noun *feritas* occur, which besides Valens in xxix. 1. 10 and Maximinus in xxviii. 1. 33, characterize barbarians. These are the only individuals for whom Ammianus uses such words. It is well known that Ammianus had a negative opinion of barbarian people, who were for him the incarnation of the forces of evil and a serious threat to the Roman empire; so from the usage of *ferus* and *feritas* we can deduce his harsh judgement of Valentinian, Valens and Maximinus.<sup>25</sup>

Valentinian had a reputation for harshness and could not restrain his wild impulses, defined respectively by the adjective *asper* and derivatives, *trux*, and other typically 'barbaric' adjectives. Given these premises, his physical portrait found in xxx. 9. 6 will arouse no surprise:

corpus eius lacertosum et validum, capilli fulgor colorisque  
nitor cum oculis caesiis, semper obliquum intuentibus et  
torvum, atque pulchritudo staturae, liniamentorumque recta  
compago, maiestatis regiae decus implebat.

The assumption that Ammianus had personally seen the emperor has been discussed: it is not unlikely that they had met in Gaul in around 357 or in the East at the beginning of 360, but it is unthinkable that after almost thirty years, when he drew up his work, Ammianus could remember the exact figure of Valentinian. The portrait that the historian gives us is therefore the stereotypical image of the emperor that he wanted to leave with us.<sup>26</sup>

His muscular physique (*corpus eius lacertosum et validum*) is the sign of a strong man who is well-suited to being a militarily valid

<sup>25</sup> On the usage of *ferus* and *feritas* see Seager 1986, pp. 55–56 and 64–65, who compares Ammianus with previous and contemporary authors on the usage of these terms. On Ammianus' view of barbarians see Dauge 1981, especially pp. 330–352. Dauge noticed that Ammianus presents barbarians from two points of view: a 'static' one, used for example to describe the Persians, Saracens and Huns, and a 'dynamic' one, used for barbarians in action, such as the Gauls in Amida and the Alamanni in Strasbourg. The traits emerging from his descriptions are basically *vanitas*, *feritas*, *inhumanitas* and *immanitas*, with the addition of bestial images, which were beloved by Ammianus: see Wiedemann 1986.

<sup>26</sup> See Paschoud 1992, pp. 67–84: pp. 67–68.



leader. His hair seems to be blonde and shining (*capilli fulgor colorisque nitor*): so, according to *Anon. de phys.* 14 *capilli flavi tenues bonos mores ostendunt, si sint minus densi*; but it is even more relevant when it states that blonde and thick hair attests rough and untamed behaviour and is related to German people (*capilli flavi et crassi et albidiores indociles et indomitos mores testantur; referuntur autem ad gentem Germanorum*). In this regard there is an interesting chapter in Vitruvius' *De architectura*, in which the author gives a comprehensive picture of the Nordic type, which corresponds point by point to the description of Valentinian: the men of the north have massive bodies, pale skin, straight and blonde hair, blue eyes, and a lot of blood because of the wet and cold climate.<sup>27</sup> In this chapter of *De architectura* – which is not indeed a canon treatise of physiognomy – we see the practical application of a branch of physiognomy, the so-called ethnographic characteriology, of which Ammianus gives splendid essays, precisely in the description of the Barbarians.<sup>28</sup>

It is clear, then, that through the filter of physiognomy Ammianus is describing Valentinian as a barbarian, physically assimilated to the category.

Compared to Constantius, Valentinian or Julian, the emperor Valens is surely a minor figure, not so much because he was a less important emperor but because the space devoted to him in the *Res Gestae* is for obvious reasons less than that granted to the others. Nevertheless, in the few chapters that have him as a protagonist (although it would be more correct to state 'deuteragonist'), he appears as an individual with little personality, extremely insecure, who, being surrounded by a court such as that of Constantius, will end up behaving just like him, with suspicion and mistrust, but ready to give ear to every calumny/slander and to act fiercely: in a word, Ammianus puts together in Valens Constantius' negative characteristic of the *patulae aures* and Valentinian's savage and cruel nature.

<sup>27</sup> Vitruv. *de archit.* vi. 1. 3 *quae sub septentrionibus nutriuntur gentes immanibus corporibus, candidis coloribus, directo capillo et rufo, oculis caesiis, sanguine multo ab umoris plenitate caelique refrigerationibus sunt conformati.*

<sup>28</sup> See his ethnographic digressions on Saracens (xiv. 4. 3–7); Gauls (xv. 9–12); Egyptians (xxii. 16. 23); Persian peoples (xxiii. 6. 1–84); Thracian peoples (xxvii. 4); Huns, Alans and other Scythian peoples (xxxi. 2).

As for Valens' description (xxxI. 14. 7), Ammianus says that he was 'procrastinator and irresolute. His complexion was dark, the pupil of one of his eyes was dimmed, but in such a way as not to be noticed at a distance; his body was well-knit, his height neither above nor below the average; he was knock-kneed, and somewhat pot-bellied':<sup>29</sup>

cessator et piger: nigri<sup>30</sup> coloris, pupula oculi unius obstructa, sed ita ut non eminus appareret, figura bene compacta membrorum, staturae nec procerae nec humilis, incurvis cruribus exstanteque mediocriter ventre.

As we have already observed, a dark complexion is a sign of cowardice,<sup>31</sup> and is typical of southern people, mainly African populations.<sup>32</sup> It is quite strange that the Pannonian Valens is epidermically similar to Constantius who is *subniger* (xxI. 16. 19), and does not have a northern and 'barbaric' complexion such as that of his brother Valentinian.<sup>33</sup>

The obstruction in one of his eyes (*pupula oculi unius obstructa*) simply seems to refer to a cataract.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Rolfe 1932–1936, III, p. 487.

<sup>30</sup> *Nigri* is a commonly accepted reading (V has *pigner igni*; E *piger igni*; *nigri vel ignei* Em<sup>2</sup> in marg.; *piger. nigri* A; *ignei* Val.). Evans 1935, p. 83 accepts Valesius' correction *ignei*: Valens would in this way acquire a note of foolishness: see pseud.-Arist. 812a οἷς δὲ τὸ χρῶμα φλογοειδές, μανικοί, ὅτι τὰ κατὰ τὸ σῶμα σφόδρα ἐκθερμανθέντα φλογοειδῇ χροὶν ἴσχει; Anon. *de phys.* 79 *color ignitus ad insaniam vergit*. But it is not clear how this trait would meet Valens' nature, which is described by Ammianus as slow (even towards conferring or removing official positions: see xxxI. 14. 2 *erga deferendas potestates vel adimendas nimium tardus*) and lazy, just before the presentation of his physical appearance (xxxI. 14. 7 *cessator et piger*). In physiognomic treatises laziness and slowness are combined with coldness, since everything cold finds it hard to move (see pseud.-Arist. 812a; the call for hot and cold as causes of psycho-physical alterations is of a Hippocratic stamp: see Raina 1993, pp. 13–17 e 31), the exact opposite of what a foolish nature would require.

<sup>31</sup> See *supra*, p. 234.

<sup>32</sup> Physiognomy counts Egyptians and Ethiopians as *nigri*. See pseud.-Arist. 812a; Anon. *de phys.* 79.

<sup>33</sup> See xxx. 9. 6. According to Sabbah 1978, p. 426 the adjective *subniger* does not convey a mere realistic notation but is primarily a means to confirm the military inefficiency of Constantius and Valens.

<sup>34</sup> See Rolfe 1932–1936, III, p. 486 n. 1.

His general physical appearance is good (*figura bene compacta membrorum, staturae nec procerae nec humilis*), and corresponds to the right proportion. In this Valens looks like his brother,<sup>35</sup> but then in his bodily details his size presents no small disharmonies, which, with his crooked legs and prominent belly (*incurvis cruribus exstanteque mediocriter ventre*) again recall Constantius' figure.<sup>36</sup> As far as I can see, here Ammianus seems to play a continuous game of self-quotation, with which he renders affinities, especially weaknesses of nature, that are common to several characters. The first of the latter two pieces of data confirms the slowness of the emperor (cf. *Anon. de phys.* 86 *Aristoteles dicit sensibus esse eos tardiores quorum crura incurva sunt*), while the second suggests his devotion to eating and drinking.<sup>37</sup> Ammianus had already informed us about Valens' passion for drinking in xxvi. 8. 2, where the emperor, during the siege of Chalcedon, was mocked by the people *ut Sabaiarius* with an insult derived from the *sabaium*, a Pannonian drink made with barley and wheat, which was typical of poor people.<sup>38</sup>

It is difficult to give a conclusive assessment of the image of Valens, as it emerges from the *Res Gestae*. This emperor does not seem to be anything other than the product of a continuous fusion of elements which characterize other individuals, especially Constantius and Valentinian. And in this incessant referring to others, and borrowing vices, virtues and images from them, it seems as if Valens is searching for his own identity but continuously lacking it: indeed, the mix of elements that form his figure is far from peaceful, because images overlap, sometimes even in a grotesque way, as for example in his physical descrip-

<sup>35</sup> See xxx. 9. 6 *pulchritudo staturae liniamentorumque recta compago*.

<sup>36</sup> See xxi. 16. 19 *ad usque pubem ab ipsis colli confiniis longior, brevissimis cruribus et incurvis*.

<sup>37</sup> See *Anon. de phys.* 64 *venter cum est magnus et congestis carnibus, si quidem mollibus et pendentibus, sine sensu hominem et vinolentum atque intemperantem, deditum luxuriae ac veneri indicat*.

<sup>38</sup> Ammianus himself informs us about it (xxvi. 8. 2): *est autem sabaia ex ordeo vel frumento, in liquorem conversis, paupertinus in Illyrico potus*. But compare also Hieronymus, in *Is.* vii. 19. 5 *quod genus est potionis ex frugibus aquaque confectum et vulgo in Dalmatiae Pannoniaeque provinciis gentili barbaricaque sermone appellatur sabaium*; and Cassius Dio xlix. 36. 3. See Mosci Sassi 1983, pp. 110–111.

tion, where Ammianus puts together limbs and structure, leaving little room for some peculiarities.<sup>39</sup>

So the descriptions of the emperors' physical appearance, both in the course of the narrative and in the necrologies, show traces of the doctrines of physiognomical traditions. Certain traits, such as hair colour or height, could not be invented or modified, so we must assume that they correspond to reality; but as we have seen, Ammianus does not always record all the features analytically, although we can find two constants, namely physique, which allows us to immediately understand to what extent an individual is virile and proportioned, and eyes, which are the mirror of the soul; rather he selects and points out one by one all those elements that help more than others to confirm his comprehensive judgment. In this way he succeeds in representing the emperors' physical appearance objectively, without falling into anti-historical falsifications. In addition, perhaps just for faithful adherence to the ideal of historical truth that he professes, Ammianus also uses real data, bending them to support his moral judgment.

In conclusion, the imperial portraits mask their subjectivity behind the representation of objective elements.

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### *Abstract*

This paper focuses on Constantius II, Valentinian and Valens' descriptions in the work of Ammianus Marcellinus, which exemplify his knowledge and usage of the doctrines of physiognomy. Ammianus' moral view of these emperors emerges from the selection of features recorded in their portraits. The historian succeeds in objectively representing the emperors' physical appearance, and uses real data to support his own judgment. So, in imperial portraits, subjectivity lies hidden behind the representation of objective elements.

*NISI MODUM EPISTOLICI  
CHARACTERIS EXCEDEREM.*  
JEROME AND EPISTOLARY *BREVITAS*

Eusebius, when writing about Origen's conduct during the persecutions under emperor Decius, refers to some letters by the Alexandrian which allegedly bear 'true' and 'exact' witness to his courage: *πλείσται ὅσαι τᾶνδρὸς ἐπιστολαὶ τᾷ ἀληθῆς ὁμοῦ καὶ ἀκριβὲς περιέχουσιν* (HE vi. 31. 5; ed. Bardy 1952–1958). This is the way epistolary texts were – and are – usually viewed: as parts of a dialogue, they 'generate the sense in the external reader that s/he is eavesdropping upon a private world and thus getting a privileged or unmediated glimpse of the writer's life and inner feelings' (Morello – Morrison 2007b, p. vi).<sup>1</sup> This 'epistolary illusion' often dissimulates the real nature of letters as sophisticated 'textual performances', with which the writer intends to advertise himself 'to his contemporaries and posterity' (Ebbeler 2009, p. 470). Needless to say, it is in this light that we must view Jerome's artful and self-conscious epistolary performances also, which are the subject of this article.

I will take my cue from a letter Jerome addresses to Marcella, one of the most erudite of his female disciples,<sup>2</sup> in 384, while staying in Rome.<sup>3</sup> In *epist.* 26 he answers a question she asked

<sup>1</sup> On letters as 'half dialogue between people who are far apart' (*sermo absentium*), see Thraede 1970; Cugusi 1983, pp. 32–33; 73–75; Malherbe 1988, p. 12 (and ancient texts listed there).

<sup>2</sup> On Marcella, see PCBE II.2, s.v. 'Marcella 1', pp. 1357–1362; Kelly 1975, pp. 91–96; Letsch-Brunner 1998; Sugano 1988. On Jerome's female disciples and their (alleged) culture, see also Moretti 2014.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Kelly 1975, pp. 80–115. For the dates of Jerome's works, I will rely on Cavallera 1922.

about some Hebrew words which feature in the Greek and Latin Bible:

Nuper cum pariter essemus, non per epistulam, ut ante consueveras, sed praesens ipsa quaesisti quid ea verba quae ex Hebraeo in Latinum non habemus expressa, apud suos sonarent, curque sine interpretatione sint posita, ut est illud: ‘alleluia’, ‘amen’, ‘maran atha’, ‘ephod’ et cetera, quae in Scripturis conspersa memorasti. Ad quod nos, quia dic-tandi angustia coartamur, breviter res-pondemus [...] (1–2; ed. Labourt 1949–2003).

The preservation of these Hebrew words is justified in the light of two reasons: firstly, the Church, which *ex Iudaeis fuerat congregata*, even when the Gospel was spread all over the world, could not innovate its own tradition; secondly, a view of Origen *in libris suis, quos ἑξηγητικὸς vocat*, is mentioned: *propter vernaculum linguae uniuscuiusque idioma non posse ita apud alios sonare ut apud suos dicta sunt, et multo esse melius ininterpretata ponere quam vim interpretatione tenuare* (2). In the following lines, *alleluia*, *amen* and *maran atha* are explained briefly. In the last chapter (5) Jerome delays explanations of further words, in order not to exceed the appropriate length of the letter and arouse Marcella’s curiosity. Here, the expression I will focus upon occurs:

Vellem tibi aliquid et de diapsalmate scribere, quod apud Hebraeos dicitur ‘sela’, et de ‘ephod’, et de eo quod in cuiusdam psalmi titulo habetur pro ‘aieleth’, et ceteris istius modi, nisi et modum epistolici characteris excederem, et tibi aviditatem magis dilatae deberent facere quaestiones.

There is no doubt that Jerome also takes advantage of letter-writing to position himself as a scriptural authority.<sup>4</sup> In this context, we will see how hints at the topos of *brevitas*, which are found copiously in his epistolary corpus, are often knowingly exploited by him in order to cast as letters texts which would otherwise not appear as such (sometimes due to their length). By

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Vessey 1993; Rebenich 1992, p. 159; Conring 2001, p. 131; Cain 2009.



such ‘epistolary illusion’ Jerome makes his own ‘idealized epistolary self-presentation’ (Cain 2009, p. 6) as a scriptural authority more credible in his public’s eyes.<sup>5</sup> I will make the point that in at least one case the mention of this topos arguably resonates with a famous passage by Origen, serving the purpose of placing Jerome’s own scriptural authority in the wake of the Alexandrian exegete, and suggesting that he himself would be a kind of ‘Origen *redivivus*’ (Cain 2006, p. 733).

Epistolary *brevitas* is mentioned very often in Jerome’s letters,<sup>6</sup> regardless of their actual length.<sup>7</sup>

As a matter of fact, conciseness is not only referred to in ancient letters<sup>8</sup> but most importantly is required in rhetorical teachings on letter-writing, as suggested, for instance, in Demetrius’ *De elocutione* (1<sup>st</sup> AD).<sup>9</sup> In this text the features of the ἐπιστολικὸς χαρακτήρ (223), a *iunctura* that perhaps should be regarded as technical,<sup>10</sup> are described. Among them, brevity is paramount, lest the letter ends up looking like a treatise to which greetings to the addressee are appended.<sup>11</sup> Despite this ‘*brevitas*-Postulat’ (Conring 2001,

<sup>5</sup> Some evidence suggests that his letters are meant to be read by a wider public than their concrete addressees: cf. Conring 2001, pp. 137; 170 n. 178; 250 (she speaks of an ‘Adressatendoppelung’); Canellis 2002, p. 314. This is also shown clearly by the inclusion of some of the letters in the list of his works in *vir. ill.* 135 (Rebenich 2002, p. 191 n. 18).

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Bartelink 1977; Conring 2001, pp. 48–62; Canellis 2002, pp. 312–313. See also Arns 1953, pp. 96–99.

<sup>7</sup> Arns 1953, p. 98. Different lengths are also reflected in the different terms designating the texts included in Jerome’s epistolary corpus (*epistulae, libelli, libri, opuscula, volumina*, etc.): see Canellis 2002, pp. 313–314, for a list of these lexical fluctuations.

<sup>8</sup> See for example Sen. *epist.* 45. 13: *ne epistulae modum excedam*...; Plin. *epist.* II. 5. 13: *Iam finem faciam, ne modum [...] in epistula excedam*; Fronto *epist.* IV. 3. 8: *ne modum epistulae egrediar, finem facio*. Cf. Cugusi 1983, p. 35.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Malherbe 1988, p. 2; Poster 2007, p. 23 n. 7. A survey of the dates proposed for its composition is in Chiron 1993, pp. XIII–XL, who argues for the 2<sup>nd</sup>–1<sup>st</sup> century BC. I quote Demetrius according to Chiron 1993.

<sup>10</sup> See for instance Philostratus’ *De epistulis* (ed. Kayser 1871, II, p. 257), who opens his short treatise referring to τὸν ἐπιστολικὸν χαρακτήρα; or Apollonius of Tyana’s *epist.* 19 (ed. Penella 1979), according to which there are five τοῦ λόγου χαρακτήρες, among which ὁ ἐπιστολικός is quoted. On Latin *character*, see below.

<sup>11</sup> Τὸ δὲ μέγεθος συνεστάλθω τῆς ἐπιστολῆς, ὥσπερ καὶ ἡ λέξις. Αἱ δὲ ἄγαν μακραὶ καὶ προσέτι κατὰ τὴν ἐρμηνείαν ὀγκωδέστεραι οὐ μὰ τὴν ἀλήθειαν ἐπιστολαὶ γένοιντο ἂν, ἀλλὰ συγγράμματα τὸ χαίρειν ἔχοντα προσγεγραμμένον (228).

p. 48), by Jerome's time brevity has become a less compulsory feature of epistles, and is stated as being subordinated to various needs. See, for example, Gregory of Nazianzus' *epist.* 51. 2.<sup>12</sup> But why then is epistolary brevity still insisted on?

A closer look at the texts belonging to the so-called *ad Marcellam liber*<sup>13</sup> will enable us to better understand how references to epistolary brevity are exploited by Jerome. The *liber* is referred to as an independent collection of letters in Hier. *vir. ill.* 135 (written about 392–393), Jerome's 'auto-bibliography' (Cain 2009, p. 13);<sup>14</sup> it should have embraced all the letters sent to the matron, between 384 and 385.<sup>15</sup>

As we shall see, the mentions of *brevitas*, along with other elements pertaining to epistolary rhetoric that are thoughtfully and abundantly employed by Jerome, cannot be accounted for merely by the author's wish to showcase his awareness of the literary genre's rules, and his freedom to break them overtly.<sup>16</sup> Rather, in most cases they are endowed with a structuring function: they may be used either to build up single letters,<sup>17</sup> or to connect individual texts to one another (a 'concatenatio-effect'). As a result, the claim to epistolarity<sup>18</sup> is very much emphasized, even in texts which per se would not otherwise look like letters.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Ἔστι δὲ μέτρον τῶν ἐπιστολῶν, ἡ χρεία (ed. Gallay 1964–1967). The same assertion is found in ps.-Liban. *epist. charact.* 49. See Thraede 1970, pp. 154–157; Malherbe 1988, p. 13; Poster 2007, p. 31.

<sup>13</sup> On this collection, cf. Letsch-Brunner 1998, pp. 84–171; and, more significantly, Cain 2009, pp. 68–98.

<sup>14</sup> On *vir. ill.*, cf. Kelly 1975, pp. 174–178; Rebenich 2002, pp. 97–100. On *vir. ill.* 135, Nautin 1984.

<sup>15</sup> Cavallera 1922, II, pp. 22–26.

<sup>16</sup> This view is supported by Bartelink 1977.

<sup>17</sup> Brevity is mentioned to conclude letters, give them a clear structure (moving from one section to the next), emphasize the importance of a topic, or justify the limits the writer sets for himself in dealing with a topic: this classification is found in Conring 2001, pp. 48–62.

<sup>18</sup> 'Often the epistolary character of an individual text is guaranteed by its place within a larger group of epistolary texts, such as in a letter-collection' (Gibson – Morrison 2007, pp. 15–16).

<sup>19</sup> A concise but full description of what an ancient 'letter' should be is found in Trapp 2003, p. 1. Besides other features, it was 'normally expected to be of a relatively limited length'.

In the *ad Marcellam liber*, first of all we should observe the close *concatenatio* among letters 26 to 29.<sup>20</sup> The beginning of the afore-mentioned *epist.* 26, which is quite short (two pages in Labourt's edition),<sup>21</sup> implicitly suggests that the reader should place this letter within the context of a familiar epistolary exchange, in that Jerome says Marcella has asked him *non per epistolam, ut ante consueveras, sed praesens ipsa* (1). *Brevitas* is mentioned twice, when Jerome justifies his touching on the reasons why Hebrew words were preserved (2) and his omitting the explanations of other words (5). Here it doubtless serves the purpose of not only limiting the topic of the letter<sup>22</sup> but also delaying further explanations to subsequent letters, so that Marcella's expectations will be heightened (see *epist.* 28–29). No mention of brevity is found in *epist.* 27 (two pages), in which Jerome defends his textual revision of the Gospels; however, the letter is placed in the above-mentioned 'epistolary chain' as it opens with a reference to *epist.* 26 (*Post priorem epistulam in qua de Hebraeis verbis pauca perstrinxeram...*, 1). In *epist.* 28 (four pages) the meaning of *διάψαλμα* (in Hebrew, *sela*) is dealt with. A hint at brevity connects this letter to *epist.* 26:

Quae acceperis reddenda cum fenore sunt, sortisque dilatio usuram parturit. De diapsalmate nostram sententiam flagittaras: epistulae brevitatem causati sumus, et rem libri non posse explicari litteris praetextuimus (cf. *epist.* 26. 5). Verum quid prode est ad ἐργодиώκτην meum? Maior tibi cupiditas silentio concitatur. Itaque ne diutius traham habeto pauca pro pluribus (1).

Remarkably *epist.* 28 also contains a long quotation from Origen, translated into Latin (5–6). In *epist.* 29 (ten pages), Jerome fulfils the promise he has made in *epist.* 26. 5. He apologizes for his haste in answering Marcella's questions (*quia vector et internuntius sermonis nostri redire festinat, rem grande celerius dicto quam debeo*, 1); his explanation of *ephod bad* is divided into two parts by an appar-

<sup>20</sup> Which have been defined as 'un feuilletton épistolaire' (Canellis 2004, pp. 370–371).

<sup>21</sup> In order to give an idea of the actual length of each letter, I provide the reader with the approximate number of pages in Labourt's edition.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Conring 2001, pp. 57–59.

ently superfluous mention of brevity (*'Teraphim' quid sit si spatium dictandi fuerit prosequemur. Nunc interim de 'ephod' ut coepimus explicandum est*, 4); then, brevity marks the move to the word *teraphim* (*Verum quia supra promiseram me, si spatium dictandi fuisset, de 'therapim' quoque breviter disserturum, nec quisquam interim interpellator advenit, ..., 6*); lastly, his having exceeded the appropriate length of a letter is adduced as one of the reasons why he delays the interpretation of the priests' robe, which should follow that of *teraphim*<sup>23</sup> (*Quam vellem nunc tibi omnem habitum sacerdotis exponere, et per singulas vestium species divina ostendere sacramenta! Verum quia in hoc ipso brevitatem epistolae excessimus..., 7*).<sup>24</sup> Even in *epist.* 29 he refers repeatedly to Marcella's insistent epistolary requests: *nihil mihi scribis, nisi quod me torqueat et Scripturas legere compellat* (1); *In fronte epistolae tuae posueras quid sibi velit quod...* (2).

Three further occurrences of brevity are found in the *liber*. In *epist.* 41, against the Montanists (three pages), the mention of *brevitas* concludes the letter, giving Jerome the opportunity to highlight both Marcella's knowledge of the Scriptures and her longing for Jerome's teachings.<sup>25</sup> The actual shortness of *epist.* 32 (one page) needs to be accounted for (*Ut tam parvam epistulam scriberem causae duplicis fuit, 1*): Jerome says he is busy comparing Aquila's translation *cum voluminibus Hebraeorum*, in order to verify *ne quid forsitan propter odium Christi synagoga mutaverit*,<sup>26</sup> and he lists in detail the Old Testament books he has already examined; in so doing, he clearly emphasizes the importance of the task he is committed to. In *epist.* 42, against the Novatianists (three pages), Jerome, who at the beginning hints at Marcella's epistolary request,<sup>27</sup> at the end apologizes for the

<sup>23</sup> The other reason being that the subject has been already been dealt with by Flavius Josephus and Philo.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Conring 2001, pp. 58–59. This task will be accomplished in *epist.* 64, a lengthy letter (twenty-three pages) he will address to Fabiola many years later, in 395–397.

<sup>25</sup> *Nec necesse est ut singula deliramenta quae proferunt brevior epistolae sermo subvertat, cum et tu ipsa Scripturas adprime tenens, non tam ad eorum mota sis quaestiones quam quid sentirem a me volueris sciscitari* (4).

<sup>26</sup> A further reason he adduces is the haste of the *tabellarius*.

<sup>27</sup> *Brevis quaestiuncula quam misisti, et aperta responsio est* (1).

brevity of the text, which does not seem to give justice to the relevance of the topic.<sup>28</sup>

No mention of epistolary *brevitas* can be found in the remaining – rather short – letters: *epist.* 23, on Lea (three pages); *epist.* 24, on Asella (three pages); *epist.* 25, on the ten Hebrew names of God (one page); *epist.* 34, on Psalm 126 (five pages);<sup>29</sup> *epist.* 37, on Reticus of Autun's commentary on the Song of Songs (two pages); *epist.* 38, on Blesilla (three pages); *epist.* 40, against the priest 'Onasus' (two pages); *epist.* 43, inviting Marcella to leave Rome (two pages); *epist.* 44, on some presents (one page).<sup>30</sup>

In all likelihood it is within the context of Jerome's constructing and using his epistolary corpus as a self-propaganda instrument that we should interpret the mention of *brevitas* in *epist.* 26. 5 (*nisi epistolici characteris modum excederem...*), in which he possibly quotes Origen's letter to Africanus.

As to this expression, firstly we should remark that Jerome should be familiar with *χαρακτήρ*/*character* ('style') as a term belonging to the technical lexicon of rhetoric.<sup>31</sup> This is shown, for instance, when he uses it in some judgments on authors' styles in his *De viris illustribus*:<sup>32</sup> four occurrences are met with there, and only one of them has a parallel in his Greek source, Eusebius' *Historia ecclesiastica*.<sup>33</sup> Secondly, *epistolicus*, an

<sup>28</sup> The difference between the two, I would argue, consists in the contents: a *lata disputatio* would be the appropriate subject for a *commentariolum*, not for a letter addressed to a friend (but see Conring 2001, p. 101).

<sup>29</sup> For a detailed analysis, Conring 2001, pp. 142–170; in response to Conring, see Adkin 2004.

<sup>30</sup> According to Nautin 1984, pp. 329–330, four further letters should be considered part of this collection: *epist.* 30 (to Paula) and 31 (to Eustochium), which Jerome attaches to *epist.* 32 to Marcella (see *epist.* 32. 1); *epist.* 33 (to Paula), on Origen, which Jerome says should also be sent to Marcella; its chronology is under debate; *epist.* 45 (to Asella), Jerome's farewell to his female friends, when leaving Rome permanently.

<sup>31</sup> See also ThLL III, col. 994, 18–45, *s.v.* *character* ('forma et genus dicendi vel stilus').

<sup>32</sup> On Jerome's 'stylistischen Urteilen', cf. Opelt 1980, pp. 67–74.

<sup>33</sup> We should not forget Jerome's dependence on Eusebius in chapters 1–78 (von Sychowski 1894, pp. 45–74, and Bernoulli 1895 examine Jerome's sources thoroughly). (1) Hier. *vir. ill.* 15 (ed. Richardson 1896): Clement's letter to the Corinthians *mihi videtur characteri epistulae, quae sub Pauli nomine ad Hebraeos fertur, convenire*; cf. Eus. *HE* III. 38. 3: ὁ καὶ μάλλον ἂν εἴη ἀληθὲς τῷ τὸν

apparent Greek loanword, is quite rare,<sup>34</sup> and seems to suggest that Jerome, when writing *epist.* 26, has in mind a Greek text. But which one?

We know that probably in 249–250,<sup>35</sup> Origen answers a letter by Julius Africanus,<sup>36</sup> who refutes the canonicity of the story of Susanna (Dn 13) because it does not feature in the Hebrew text of the book of Daniel.<sup>37</sup>

In order to support his view, Africanus also dwells on a linguistic problem concerning the text. The two old Jews who falsely accuse Susanna of seducing a young man, are demonstrated to be liars by Daniel's showing that they have given different accounts of Susanna's alleged guilt (Dn 13. 52–59): one says she seduced him under a holm tree (ὑπὸ πρῖνον), which is why Daniel tells him he will be sawn asunder (πρίσειν), whereas the other speaks of a mastic tree (ὑπὸ σχίνον), which is why he will be rent asunder (σχισθῆναι). In Africanus' view, these puns prove that the story of Susanna was written in Greek, and hence could not be present in the Hebrew original.

Origen, in a letter about ten times longer than that of Africanus, apologizes for his answer, which due to lack of time and little ability will be far from sufficient (1–2). He rebukes the principle of accepting into the canon only texts that can be shown to have been translated from Hebrew, as this would

ὁμοιον τῆς φράσεως χαρακτήρα τὴν τε τοῦ Κλήμεντος ἐπιστολὴν καὶ τὴν πρὸς Ἑβραίους ἀποσώζειν (Sychowski 1894, p. 101; Bernoulli 1895, p. 119). (2) *vir. ill.* 22: Hegesippus wrote his historical work *sermone simplici, ut, quorum vitam sectabatur, dicendi quoque exprimeret charactera*; cf. Eus. *HE* iv. 8. 2 (Sychowski 1894, p. 111; Bernoulli 1895, p. 124). (3) *vir. ill.* 117: Gregory of Nazianzus *secutus est autem polemonium dicendi χαρακτήρα* (Sychowski 1894, p. 189). (4) *vir. ill.* 119: Diodorus of Tarsus' works are described as *ad Eusebii magis Emiseni characterem pertinentia* (Sychowski 1894, p. 190).

<sup>34</sup> ThLL V.2, col. 680, 12–19, *s.v. epistolicus*: besides Jerome, it seems to occur only in the title of Varro's *Epistolicarum quaestionum libri*, quoted among others in Gellius, and in the handbooks by Charisius and Diomedes.

<sup>35</sup> Nautin 1977, p. 182; De Lange 1983, pp. 498–501.

<sup>36</sup> On Julius Africanus, who is also dealt with in Hier. *vir. ill.* 63, see Kroll 1918; Winkelmann 1991.

<sup>37</sup> I quote Africanus' and Origen's letters according to De Lange 1983; only Africanus' letter is published in Reichardt 1909, pp. 78–80. On this epistolary dossier, see De Lange 1983, pp. 471–511; De Lange 1985; Buzàsi 2009; Roberto 2011, pp. 41–42.

imply that many parts of the Greek Bible, which are read in the Church, should mistakenly be excised (3–9). Then, he refutes all his addressee's remaining arguments (10–22). He dwells on the refutation of the argument based on the lexical puns (ὅπερ ἐστὶ τὸ περὶ τὴν παρωνυμίαν πρίνου μὲν πρὸς πρίσιν, σχίνου δὲ πρὸς σχίσιν: 10). On this point, he alleges the witness of some Jews he has interviewed, who say that as these trees are never mentioned elsewhere in the Hebrew Scriptures, it would be impossible to guess how they would be named in Hebrew (10). In Origen's view, the puns do not rule out a Hebrew original, because an expert translator might have devised the Greek text in order to imitate a Hebrew pun, creating a new one compatible with the Greek language (18). In addition, he says, some oral Hebrew traditions on the story of Susanna are handed down, which may indicate that the Susanna narrative has been expunged by Jews, wishing to delete a story that could outrage the Hebrew elders (11–13).

The relevance of the topics dealt with in this letter is paramount: the relationship between the scriptural canon of the Old Testament and the Hebrew text on the one hand;<sup>38</sup> and on the other, Origen's philological study of the Bible and his *Hexapla*, as far as we can judge from the apologetic tone of the first part of his letter, especially chapter 9.<sup>39</sup> Therefore Origen, wishing to portray himself 'as the champion of the Churches' Bible',<sup>40</sup> probably writes this letter with a view to its publication, and circulates it in a dossier, together with his correspondent's epistle,<sup>41</sup> in order to assert himself as an undisputed scriptural authority: the dossier has come down to us in the *catenae* on the book of Daniel.

Now, Jerome's turn of phrase in my view resonates with the incipit of Origen's letter, in which he underlines that his correspondent's questions are so significant that, in order to answer them properly, each one would deserve a full treatise, requiring him to exceed the length of an epistle:

<sup>38</sup> On Jerome's view of the scriptural canon, see Brown 1992, pp. 62–71.

<sup>39</sup> De Lange 1985.

<sup>40</sup> De Lange 1985, pp. 242; 247.

<sup>41</sup> Nautin 1961, pp. 242–244.

Ἡ μὲν σὴ ἐπιστολὴ, δι' ἧς ἐμάνθανον ἃ ἐνέφηνας περὶ τῆς ἐν τῷ Δανιὴλ φερομένης ἐν ταῖς Ἐκκλησίαις Σωσάννης, βραχεῖα μὲν τις εἶναι δοκεῖ· ἐν ὀλίγοις δὲ πολλὰ προβλήματα ἔχουσα, ὣν ἕκαστον ἐδεῖτο οὐ τῆς τυχούσης ἐξεργασίας, ἀλλὰ τοσαύτης, ὥστε ὑπερβαίνειν τὸν ἐπιστολικὸν χαρακτῆρα, καὶ συγγραμματος ἔχειν περιγραφὴν (2).

Further evidence of Jerome's knowledge of Origen's letter to Africanus should be recalled here, although it dates from later than 384.

Unfortunately nothing can be inferred from Jerome's epistle 33, addressed to Paula in 385,<sup>42</sup> in which the writer lists Origen's works and compares them to those of Varro: there Jerome is heavily dependent on Eusebius' *Vita Pamphili*,<sup>43</sup> rather than on his own direct reading of Origen, and in any case the Africanus-Origen dossier is not mentioned.<sup>44</sup>

On the other hand, Jerome demonstrates definite acquaintance with the dossier in the years 392–393: firstly, in his *praefatio* to the translation of the book of Daniel,<sup>45</sup> where, in order to refute Africanus' argument, he thinks out a corresponding Latin pun;<sup>46</sup> secondly, in his *De viris illustribus*, where he quotes the two letters in the chapter devoted to Africanus.<sup>47</sup> However, later

<sup>42</sup> According to Cavallera 1922, II, p. 26. Opelt 1986 suggests the date of its composition should be brought forward to 393 (due to its apologetic tone and to possible relationships with Jerome's other works); she is followed, among others, by Vessey 1993, p. 139, who remarks (n. 14) that *epist.* 33 is referred to by Rufin. *apol. adv. Hier.* II. 23 as a *libellus*, with no mention of its addressee, Paula.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Nautin 1961, pp. 237–238; Nautin 1977, pp. 227–260. Likewise, Jerome is shown to have had only indirect knowledge of the *tomi* of Origen's epistles during his life: cf. Nautin 1961, pp. 155–165.

<sup>44</sup> Jerome's text reads: *Firmi- ani et Gregorii et diversorum ad eum epistularum libri II; epistulae sinodorum in libro II. Epistularum eius ad diversos libri VIII. Aliarum epistularum libri II; epistula pro apologia operum suorum in libro II (epist. 33. 4; I quote the text established and discussed in detail by Nautin 1961, p. 237). The conjecture *Africani* for the *Firmiani* attested in the manuscripts was proposed by Klostermann 1897, p. 869; although fascinating, it must be mistaken (Nautin 1961, pp. 234–235 n. 4).*

<sup>45</sup> Cavallera 1922, II, p. 28; Brown 1992, p. 103.

<sup>46</sup> On the canonicity of Daniel, see also the chapter on Daniel in Hier. *adv. Rufin.* II. 33, dating from 401 (Cavallera 1922, II, p. 41).

<sup>47</sup> Hier. *vir. ill.* 63: *Huius [scil. Africani] est epistula ad Origenem super quaestione Susannae, eo quod dicat in Hebraico hanc fabulam non haberi nec convenire cum*



on in 407,<sup>48</sup> in his commentary on Daniel (*in Dan.* 13. 1–2), Jerome declares that he comments on Dn 13–14 relying on the tenth book of Origen’s *Stromateis*, a work dating from much earlier than the letter to Africanus.<sup>49</sup> The issue of the puns is evoked again by Jerome (*in Dan.* 13. 58–59): there, differently from what he has written before, he states that this passage should be expunged unless the puns can be shown to be plausible in Hebrew also.

To sum up, the hypothesis that Jerome has known Africanus’ and Origen’s letters since 384, when he writes *epist.* 26, is supported by the lexical similarity between ἐπιστολικὸν χαρακτήρα and *epistolici characteris*, which in my view should not be regarded as coincidental. Moreover, this would fit very well with what we know of the Stridonensis: in fact, in the years previous to 393, before the Origenian controversy broke out, Jerome makes many efforts (including literary) to fashion himself after Origen, making the Alexandrian into the hero of the *ad Marcellam liber*.<sup>50</sup> This is why he might reasonably have exploited Origen’s epistolary self-propaganda in order to position himself as a champion of scriptural philology, and present himself – so to say – as an ‘origenized’ Jerome.

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*Hebraica etymologia* ἀπὸ τοῦ πρίνου πρίσαι καὶ ἀπὸ τοῦ σχίνου σχίσαι, *contra quem doctam epistulam scripsit Origenes*. No trace of the Greek puns is found in the source he is translating, Eus. *HE* vi. 31. 1: ἐπιστολὴ τούτου Ὡριγένει γραφεῖσα φέρεται, ἀποροῦντος ὡς νόθου καὶ πεπλασμένης οὔσης τῆς ἐν τῷ Δανιὴλ κατὰ Σουσάνναν ἱστορίας· πρὸς ἣν Ὡριγένης ἀντιγράφει πληρέστατα (Sychowski 1894, p. 157; Bernoulli 1895, p. 276).

<sup>48</sup> Cavallera 1922, II, p. 52; Brown 1992, p. 162.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. Nautin 1977, pp. 293–302; 368–371; De Lange 1983, pp. 491–493.

<sup>50</sup> Vessey 1993; in his wake, Cain 2006.

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*Abstract*

Jerome's quoting epistolary *brevitas* in letter 26 to Marcella could betray his knowledge of Origen's letter to Julius Africanus on the canonicity of the book of Daniel. This hypothesis is supported by a lexical similarity, which should not be regarded as coincidental. Moreover, it would fit very well with what we know of Jerome: in the years prior to 393, before the Origenian controversy broke out, he made many efforts to fashion himself after Origen, making the Alexandrian the hero of the letters collected in the *ad Marcellam liber*. This is why he may reasonably have exploited Origen's epistolary self-propaganda in order to fashion himself as a champion of scriptural philology, and to present himself – so to say – as an 'origenized' Jerome.



LUIGI PIROVANO

LUCRETIA IN THE WORLD  
OF SOPHISTOPOLIS:  
A RHETORICAL READING  
OF AUG. *CIV.* I. 19

In an early chapter of the *City of God* (I. 19), Augustine submits the tale of Lucretia<sup>1</sup> to a radical ‘re-textualization’<sup>2</sup> in the context of the intellectual debate between Christians and pagans after the sack of Rome (410 AD). In doing so, he goes so far as to doubt the chastity of the heroine and propose a quite unconventional interpretation of her suicide, explicitly questioning the value of one of the most important *exempla virtutis* of Roman tradition.<sup>3</sup>

As has often been recognized by scholars, rhetoric plays a very important role in this reinterpretation;<sup>4</sup> however, to date no-one has analysed in detail the modalities through which the interpretative categories of rhetoric operate in it. What is the rhetorical approach of Augustine to the tale of Lucretia? Which rhetorical tools does he use, and how do they affect the way he gives this traditional story a new and challenging interpretation?

The purpose of this study is to offer a rhetorical reading of chapter I. 19 of the *City of God*. I shall call attention to the fact that all aspects of Augustine’s reasoning can only be

<sup>1</sup> The literature on Lucretia’s story, its *Fortleben* and significance, is immense. Given the limited scope of this work, I simply refer to some recent contributions, where one can find a complete list of ancient sources, and copious additional bibliography: see Donaldson 1982; Corsaro 1983; Kleszczewski 1983; Trout 1994; Landolfi 2004; Freund 2008; Ramires 2010; Franchi 2012; Glendinning 2013.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Trout 1994.

<sup>3</sup> In addition to the excellent analysis of Trout 1994, cf. Donaldson 1982, pp. 28–33; Wu 2007, pp. 1–14; Franchi 2012, pp. 1090–1095.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. e.g. Trout 1994, p. 63; Franchi 2012, pp. 1090–1091.

fully explained by taking into account the rules and conventions of declamatory practice. And I shall argue that by creating a *controversia* in miniature, the Bishop of Hippo is trying to beat his pagan adversaries at their own game.

### 1. *Rape and Suicide after the Sack of Rome*

Augustine offers his interpretation of Lucretia's tale in a particularly urgent and critical context. Shortly after the sack of Rome in 410 AD, some pagans seized the opportunity to criticize the behaviour of a number of Christian women (including nuns) who, after being subjected to sexual violence, had refused to commit suicide to redeem their honour.<sup>5</sup> Augustine devotes to this difficult issue some delicate chapters of the *City of God* (I. 16–19),<sup>6</sup> where the necessity to answer the criticism of his adversaries is strictly connected to the pastoral concern of consoling the rape victims and defending their behaviour.<sup>7</sup>

The foundation upon which Augustine builds his whole reasoning rests upon two cornerstones: (a) purity (*castitas*) is a virtue of the mind, and therefore cannot be destroyed if the body is violated without the victim's consent;<sup>8</sup> (b) a person who commits suicide should be considered a homicide (*homicida*),<sup>9</sup> and there is no law allowing a private person to kill a man, even if guilty, the most striking example being that of Judas, who by hanging himself increased rather than expiated the crime he had committed.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Trout 1994, p. 62.

<sup>6</sup> Books I–III of the *City of God* were published before September 413 AD: Trout 1994, p. 53 n. 2.

<sup>7</sup> Aug. *civ.* I. 16: *Nec tantum hic curamus alienis responsionem reddere, quantum ipsis nostris consolationem.*

<sup>8</sup> See especially Aug. *civ.* I. 18.

<sup>9</sup> The same statement occurs e.g. in Lact. *inst.* III. 18: Van Hoof 1990, p. 195, links it with the Neo-Platonic tradition. On Augustine's concept of suicide, cf. Bels 1975.

<sup>10</sup> Aug. *civ.* I. 17: *Nam utique si non licet privata potestate hominem occidere vel nocentem, cuius occidendi licentiam lex nulla concedit, profecto etiam qui se ipsum occidit homicida est, et tanto fit nocentior, cum se occiderit, quanto innocentior in ea causa fuit, qua se occidendum putavit.*



The combination of these two premises leads to an incontrovertible conclusion (civ. i. 18):

Quam ob rem non habet quod in se morte spontanea puniat femina sine ulla sua consensione violenter oppressa et alieno compressa peccato; quanto minus antequam hoc fiat! Ne admittatur homicidium certum, cum ipsum flagitium, quamvis alienum, adhuc pendet incertum.

Augustine could stop here, but he feels that something is still lacking in order to obtain a landslide victory. His adversaries had indicated Lucretia as a paradigm to follow in cases of rape, and hence claimed the superiority of pagan models. It is for this reason that he decides to beat them at their own game, by offering a new – and openly challenging – interpretation of the tale of Lucretia.

## 2. *The controversia on Lucretia*

After briefly summarising the events which led Lucretia to the decision to commit suicide,<sup>11</sup> Augustine approaches this traditional model of chastity by asking a string of rhetorical questions, which are in fact aimed at insinuating doubts in the iron-clad certainties of his adversaries:

Quid dicemus? Adultera haec an casta iudicanda est? Quis in hac controversia laborandum putaverit? Egregie quidam ex hoc veraciterque declamans ait: 'Mirabile dictu, duo fuerunt et adulterium unus admisit'. Splendide atque verissime. Intuens enim in duorum corporum commixtione unius inquinatissimam cupiditatem, alterius castissimam voluntatem, et non quid coniunctione membrorum, sed quid animorum diversitate ageretur adtendens: 'Duo', inquit, 'fuerunt, et adulterium unus admisit'.

Who could doubt Lucretia's purity? This *exemplum virtutis* was so well established and unanimously acknowledged that nobody could really be willing to question it. Or could someone?

<sup>11</sup> Augustine's source is probably Liv. i. 57–60: Trout 1994, pp. 55–56.

In order to understand Augustine's approach to Lucretia's tale, it is necessary to point out that the word *controversia* is used here in its rhetorical meaning of 'declamation belonging to judiciary oratory'.<sup>12</sup> The Bishop of Hippo is thinking concretely of the exercise of *declamatio*, and in particular of the practice – very common both in Greek and Latin tradition – of adopting historical themes as subject-matter for declamatory exercises.<sup>13</sup> Like many other historical (or mythological) characters,<sup>14</sup> Lucretia is hauled in front of a mock tribunal and compelled to prove her chastity.

In doing so, Augustine seems to fit within a well-established tradition, about which we know only a few details. The single significant parallel is offered by the late rhetorician Emporius, who in his *Praeceptum deliberativae* elaborates on an example of *suasoria* based on Lucretia's choice (*deliberatio Lucretiae, an propter inlatum sibi stuprum semet occidat*).<sup>15</sup> Although the literary genre (a rhetorical textbook), the rhetorical perspective (deliberative), and the purpose (proposing an example of deliberation *in utramque partem*) are different to those of Augustine, it is evident that the declamatory 'use' of the character of Lucretia, the ability to analyse in detail the pros and cons of her choice, and the attitude to question the purity of her behaviour are in fact similar.

One can therefore suppose that Augustine has freely drawn on a traditional repertory of ideas and examples, about which we know almost nothing today. This conclusion is supported by the fact that Augustine himself, as a starting point for his 'declamation', quotes the sentence of an anonymous declaimer (*mirabile dictu, duo fuerunt et adulterium unus admisit*), that probably

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Franchi 2012, p. 1091. Modern translations are often too generic: 'Who can think it necessary to ponder over the answer?' (G. E. McCracken, Cambridge, Mass. – London 1957); 'Who can think it worthwhile to argue over such a question?' (R. W. Dyson, Cambridge 1998); 'Chi pensa di affannarsi in una discussione simile?' (D. Gentili, Roma 1978).

<sup>13</sup> Russell 1983, pp. 106–128; Nicolai 2008, pp. 160–172.

<sup>14</sup> A useful list of declamatory themes based on Greek and Roman history is provided by Kohl 1915.

<sup>15</sup> Emp. *rhet.* 572.26 – 574.27 H. On *Praeceptum deliberativae*, see Pirovano 2012 (with further bibliography).

comes from a *controversia* in defence of the chastity of Lucretia.<sup>16</sup> At first the Bishop of Hippo declares that he fully agrees with the content of this sentence (*egregie; veraciter; splendide; verissime*), which in fact corresponds perfectly with what he has previously stated (*castitas* is a virtue of the mind): but there will be soon an occasion to put it into question.

### 3. Adultera haec an casta iudicanda est?

Trials concerning adultery were very common in both Greek and Latin declamations,<sup>17</sup> and as such they often occur in rhetoric textbooks, where they are analysed and classified in different ways depending on the particular situation.<sup>18</sup> In our case, Augustine clearly portrays the *controversia* about Lucretia as a case of *status coniecturalis*, in which prosecution and defence are required to determine *utrum Lucretia adultera an casta iudicanda sit*. It is a very common typology of declamation,<sup>19</sup> which was certainly quite familiar to Augustine and his rivals, and was normally treated on the basis of standard strategies.<sup>20</sup>

Sulpicius Victor notes that cases of adultery must often be treated according to the scheme of *duplex coniectura*, because it is necessary to ascertain the will of both the man and the woman involved (*non solum an ille voluerit, sed etiam an illa*), and to determine whether the man had the possibility of corrupting the woman and the woman of committing the fault (*neque solum ane facultatem corrumpendi habuerit ille, sed etiam an illa peccandi*).<sup>21</sup> This is exactly what Augustine will do.

<sup>16</sup> Franchi 2012, p. 1092.

<sup>17</sup> For Latin declamations, cf. Lentano 2012, pp. 12–14.

<sup>18</sup> *Isazusa* (there are not the conditions for a trial): Iul. Vict. *rhet.* 4. 5 ff. G.-C.; Fortun. *rhet.* 1. 2 and Aug. *rhet.* 15 (p. 146.11–23 H.); *coniectura* (someone is charged with adultery, but it is not certain whether he/she committed it): Quint. *inst.* vii. 2. 51–52; Sulp. Vict. *rhet.* 33 (p. 331.30–34 H.); 36 (p. 334.14–25 H.); *definitio* (the fact is clear, but there is not agreement on its definition): Quint. *inst.* vii. 31. 1; Mart. Cap. v. 451.

<sup>19</sup> The most popular example is perhaps Sen. *contr.* ii. 7: cf. Berti 2007, pp. 43–78; Brescia 2012, pp. 38–47 (with further bibliography).

<sup>20</sup> Calboli Montefusco 1986, pp. 70–77.

<sup>21</sup> Sulp. Vict. *rhet.* 36 (334.14–25 H.).

4. *Lucretia and Roman Laws*

After initially agreeing with the sentence of the anonymous declaimer, Augustine begins to question it by comparing the contrasting destinies of Tarquinius and Lucretia:

Sed quid est hoc, quod in eam gravius vindicatur, quae adulterium non admisit? Nam ille patria cum patre pulsus est, haec summo est mactata supplicio. Si non est illa impudicitia qua invita opprimitur, non est haec iustitia qua casta punitur. Vos appello, leges iudicesque Romani. Nempe post perpetrata facinora nec quemquam scelestum indemnatum impune voluistis occidi. Si ergo ad vestrum iudicium quisquam deferret hoc crimen vobisque probaretur non solum indemnatum, verum etiam castam et innocentem interfectam esse mulierem, nonne eum, qui id fecisset, severitate congrua plecteretur? Hoc fecit illa Lucretia; illa, illa sic praedicata Lucretia innocentem, castam, vim perperam Lucretiam insuper interemit. Proferte sententiam. Quod si propterea non potestis, quia non adest quam punire possitis, cur interfectoricem innocentis et castae tanta praedicatione laudatis?

Lucretia was chaste and suffered the supreme penalty; Sextus Tarquinius committed adultery and was only banished from Rome (together with his father). How is it possible? According to what kind of justice is a chaste person punished by death (*casta punitur*)?

These words contrast at least partially with the point Augustine has previously stated (*occidendi licentiam lex nulla concedit*), since they imply that the murder of an adulterer would be legal or at least acceptable. This is not strange within the logic of *controversiae*: as a matter of fact, the possibility to slay people (especially women) who have committed adultery is a recurring theme in declamations and rhetorical textbooks (where we can find different ‘declamatory laws’ based on this topic)<sup>22</sup> and

<sup>22</sup> *Adulteros liceat occidere* (Quint. inst. iii. 6. 17; v. 10. 39; v. 10. 88; Fortun. rhet. i. 6; i. 9; Iul. Vict. rhet. 5. 7 G.-C.; Quint. DMin 284); *adulterum aut occidere aut accepta pecunia dimittere liceat* (Quint. DMin 279); *adulteros deprehensos liceat occidere* (Sulp. Vict. rhet. 42; 47); *adulterum cum adultera liceat occidere*

was explicitly contemplated by Roman legislation, at least after the promulgation of the *Lex Iulia de adulteriis coercendis* (18 BC).<sup>23</sup> When writing this passage, Augustine was probably thinking of the situation of *adulterium* in the Roman world, and of a law which in fact granted in some cases the *licentia occidendi*.<sup>24</sup>

But at this point Augustine turns the tables. After appealing directly to the laws and judges of Rome – a very typical feature of declamatory style – he unexpectedly quotes a provision from another law, namely the Law of Twelve Tables, which forbids the slaying of a person without a trial (*nec quemquam scelestum indemnatum inipune voluistis occidi*).<sup>25</sup> Lucretia was killed, Augustine continues, not only without a trial but also without guilt (*non solum indemnata, verum etiam castam et innocentem*): therefore her murderer deserves to be punished with fitting severity. And the murderer of Lucretia is of course Lucretia herself, who – this time according to what Augustine has previously stated (I. 17 *qui se ipsum occidit homicida est*) – can be considered a ‘self-murderess’!

(Quint. *inst.* vii. 1.7; Iul. Vict. *rhet.* 31.18 ff. G.-C.; Calp. *decl.* 49; Quint. DMin. 244; 286; 347); *adulterum cum adultera qui deprenderit, dum utrumque corpus interficiat, sine fraude sit* (Sen. *contr.* i. 4; ix. 1; see Quint. *inst.* v. 10. 104: *lex [...] prohibet adulteram sine adultero occidere*); *et matres et sorores in adulterio deprehensas liceat occidere* (Calp. *decl.* 31); *liceat in matribus adulteria vindicare* (Calp. *decl.* 23); *liceat adulterium in matre et filio vindicare* (Sen. *contr.* i. 4). Cf. Bonner 1949, pp. 119–122.

<sup>23</sup> After the approval of *Lex Iulia*, the State intervened directly in the repression of sexual crimes, previously entrusted to the responsibility of the family. According to that law: (a) if the adulterers were discovered *in flagrante delicto*, the woman’s father had the right to kill (*ius occidendi*) both his daughter and her lover, while the husband could kill only the adulterer but not his wife; (b) if the adultery was only discovered at a later time, or simply suspected, the father and husband of the adulteress had the right to a privileged accusation (*accusatio adulterii iure mariti vel patris*). If the killing of an adulterer or adulteress violated these rules, it was considered homicide. Cf. Fayer 2005, pp. 212–311.

<sup>24</sup> Significantly, Augustine’s words (*in eam gravius vindicatur, quam adulterium non admisit*) are akin to the formulation of some laws: in addition to Sen. *contr.* i. 4 and Calp. *decl.* 23 (see above), cf. e.g. *dig.* XLVII. 5. 14. 2: *Sed et in ea uxore potest adulterium vindicare, quae vulgaris fuerit, etc.*; 7: *Sed ita demum adulterium maritus vindicabit, si vim hostium passa non est*.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Salv. *gub.* viii. 5 (= XII tab. ix. 6 Riccobono): *Interfici enim indemnatum quemcunque hominem etiam XII tabularum decreta vetuerunt*.

5. *Augustine's Dilemma:*  
Si adulterata, cur laudata? Si pudica, cur occisa?

These premises provide Augustine with the opportunity to question explicitly Lucretia's chastity:

Quid si enim (quod ipsa tantummodo nosse poterat) quamvis iuveni violenter inruenti etiam sua libidine inlecta consensit idque in se puniens ita doluit, ut morte putaret expiandum? [...] Verum tamen si forte ita est falsumque est illud, quod 'duo fuerunt et adulterium unus admisit', sed potius ambo adulterium commiserunt, unus manifesta invasione, altera latente consensione: non se occidit insontem, et ideo potest a litteratis eius defensoribus dici non esse apud inferos inter illos, 'qui sibi letum / insontes peperere manu' [Verg. *Aen.* vi. 434 f.].

Doubting the sentence of the anonymous declaimer, Augustine now insinuates the possibility that Lucretia might have committed adultery by secret consent (*etiam sua libidine inlecta consensit; latente consensione*). In this case, she could no longer be considered innocent, and her suicide should be interpreted in a different light. At this point, only two possibilities remain open:

Sed ita haec causa ex utroque latere coartatur, ut, si extenuatur homicidium, adulterium confirmetur; si purgatur adulterium, homicidium cumuletur; nec omnino invenitur exitus, ubi dicitur: 'Si adulterata, cur laudata; si pudica, cur occisa?'.

The accumulation of terms stemming from the specialized vocabulary of rhetoric (*extenuare; purgare; cumulare; confirmare*), the intentional contraposition of the sentences, the compelling logic, and the catchy final question, suggest that we are facing the very core of the *controversia*.

Leveraging the points of his previous reasoning, Augustine leaves us with two alternatives, both unflattering: (1) if Lucretia (the victim of murder) is chaste, then Lucretia (the murderess) is guilty, (a) because she killed an innocent person, against the *Lex Iulia* (or, which is the same, against the 'declamatory laws' on adultery), and (b) because she killed a person without trial, against the provision of the Law of Twelve Tables; (2) if Lucretia (the victim of murder) is an adulteress, then Lucretia

(the murderess) can be considered innocent, because in some cases the *Lex Iulia* grants the *ius occidendi*, and in fact this defensive strategy can occasionally be used to justify an homicide.<sup>26</sup> To sum up, Lucretia can be considered either an adulteress or a murderess, and if Augustine's opponents want to propose her as a model of chastity, they will therefore be forced to disown the value and legitimacy of her suicide (*si pudica, cur occisa?*).

This is a perfect dilemma which leaves no way out, but one cannot fail to notice that Augustine is able to achieve check-mate thanks to a couple of 'tricks'. The first and more evident one is classifying the suicide as a form of homicide, according to the point previously stated (I. 17 *qui se ipsum occidit homicida est*): this expedient creates a sort of logical short-circuit, which allows Augustine to identify the victim with the murderess and to charge Lucretia with two alternative crimes (murder or adultery). As we have noticed, this is a traditional element which also occurs in Lactantius' work, for example; but in the light of the above it may be interesting to add that Quintilian devotes some space to discussing the problem *an qui se interficit homicida sit* from the rhetorical point of view.<sup>27</sup>

The second stratagem is more recondite, and for this reason more insidious. To reveal it we first need to answer a question: if Lucretia's situation can be interpreted as a case of adultery, and with the *Lex Iulia* it is possible to make a judgment of her behaviour (1a + 2), then why does Augustine invoke the Law of Twelve Tables (1b), which is not only useless but also contradictory with the rest of the reasoning?<sup>28</sup> To give an answer, we can note that the same provision of the Law of Twelve Tables occurs in other rhetorical sources, where it is used to question the legitimacy of murders committed in extreme

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Quint. inst. III. 16. 17: *Sit enim accusatoris intentio 'hominem occidisti', si negat reus, faciat statum qui negat. Quid? Si confitetur, sed iure a se adulterum dicit occisum (nempe legem esse certum est, quae permittat), nisi aliquid accusator respondet, nulla lis est.*

<sup>27</sup> Quint. inst. VII. 3. 7.

<sup>28</sup> In fact, according to the *Lex Iulia*, adulterers discovered *in flagrante delicto* could be killed without trial. See Cato (*De dote*, or. 68 fr. 2, *apud* Gell. x. 23. 5), who of course refers to a situation preceding the *Lex Iulia*: *In adulterio uxorem tuam siprehendisses, sine iudicio inpune necares.*

circumstances.<sup>29</sup> The Bishop of Hippo is therefore adopting a common rhetorical scheme, which is also occasionally used in declamatory practice.<sup>30</sup>

However, this answer would not be complete without adding that the provision of the Law of Twelve Tables had already been proposed by Augustine, with slightly different words, before treating the case of Lucretia (I. 17 *non licet privata potestate hominem occidere vel nocentem, cuius occidendi licentiam lex nulla concedit*). We must therefore conclude that the Bishop of Hippo had prepared the victory well in advance, and that the ‘extraneous’ element in the whole reasoning is not the Law of Twelve Tables but the *Lex Iulia*, which in fact grants the *licentia occidendi* in some cases. Augustine probably does not agree with it (and it is not by chance that he never refers directly to it) but he nevertheless decides to adopt the logic of the *Lex Iulia* to create his perfect dilemma. One need not be surprised: a free – and sometimes specious – use of the laws is a very typical feature of declamatory practice.

## 6. *A Step Back*

At this point victory is granted, but Augustine takes a step back. This could seem surprising, but in fact is not so: since the beginning, his purpose was not to question Lucretia’s chastity but rather her decision to commit suicide. In other words, the problem of chastity was raised only to solve the issue of suicide: as suicide can only be justified as a result of misconduct, if one accepts the chastity of Lucretia, one cannot at the same time approve her decision to commit suicide.

Augustine can now definitively agree with the sentence of the anonymous declaimer and judge Lucretia’s suicide in a different light: this is not proof of her love of purity, but a consequence

<sup>29</sup> Cic. *part.* 106: *Ne sceleratissimum quidem civem sine iudicio iure ullo necare potuisti*; Aug. *rhet.* 14: *Numquid ne pessime quidem de se meritos indemnatos debuerit occidere*.

<sup>30</sup> Quint. *DMin.* 348: *Imperator in bello summam habeat potestatem. Imperator proditiōis suspectos in carcerem coniecit. Ex transfuga comperit eadem nocte finitum iri proditiōnem. Incendit carcerem. Perierunt illi qui erant in carcere. Hostes recesserunt. Accusatur quod de indemnatis sumpserit supplicium*.



of her excessive desire for fame, which is in fact a typical characteristic of pagan women (*Romana mulier, laudis avida nimium, verita est ne putaretur, quod violenter est passa cum viveret, libenter passa si viveret*). On the contrary, the behaviour of Christian women, who can rely on their good conscience before the eyes of God,<sup>31</sup> was quite different!

### 7. Lucretia's προσαγγελία?

Our analysis could end here, but perhaps there is something more to be said. As we have seen, Augustine addresses the problem of Lucretia's suicide – the main issue – only indirectly, by focusing on a secondary issue i.e. her chastity. He does not intend to doubt the purity of Lucretia, but nonetheless decides to challenge his opponents on this topic. This could be the result of a random strategy, but perhaps there is a more precise explanation.

Among the imaginative and improbable scenarios which form the background of ancient declamations, there is a typology which deals specifically with suicide: the so-called προσαγγελία (self-denunciation) or *mortis voluntariae causa*, a legal process whereby a man asks the City Council – the Senate in Rome – for permission to commit suicide, explaining the reasons why his life is no longer worth living.<sup>32</sup>

Despite its unlikely and paradoxical appearance, or perhaps precisely because of it, προσαγγελία was very common in both Greek and Latin declamatory practice.<sup>33</sup> According to common

<sup>31</sup> *Non hoc fecerunt feminae Christianae, quae passae similia vivunt tamen nec in se ultae sunt crimen alienum, ne aliorum sceleribus adderent sua, si, quoniam hostes in eis concupiscendo stupra commiserant, illae in se ipsis homicidia erubescendo committerent. Habent quippe intus gloriam castitatis, testimonium conscientiae; habent autem coram oculis Dei sui nec requirunt amplius, ubi quid recte faciant non habent amplius, ne deviant ab auctoritate legis divinae, cum male devitant offensionem suspicionis humanae.* Cf. Trout 1994, p. 66.

<sup>32</sup> People committing suicide without the permission of City Council / Senate were condemned to remain unburied. On προσαγγελία, see now Stramaglia 2013, pp. 85–86 n. 3 (with further bibliography).

<sup>33</sup> Russell 1983, pp. 64–65; Kaster 1995, pp. 325–326; Stramaglia 2003, pp. 220–221 n. 17; Stramaglia 2013, pp. 85–86 n. 3.

opinion,<sup>34</sup> cases of this kind were normally treated on the basis of the prescriptions provided for the *qualitas negotialis*,<sup>35</sup> but there is at least one rhetorician standing out from the crowd, namely Sulpicius Victor, who offers a different and interesting opinion.<sup>36</sup> Sulpicius correctly observes that in order to grant someone the ‘right to suicide’ (*moriendi potestas*), the Senate needs to know about the life of the person willing to die, and the reasons behind this extreme decision. Consequently, the issue does not refer to the future but to the past; the nature of the cause is not ‘deliberative’ but ‘judiciary’; the status is not *qualitas negotialis* but *remotio criminis* or *venia deprecativa* or everything else but *qualitas negotialis*.<sup>37</sup>

In such a way, the focus of the *causa* is shifted from the suicide and its consequences to the reasons determining it: the life of the person willing to die becomes the subject-matter of the declamation and the declamation in turn becomes a sort of self-incrimination (*qui causas mortis voluntariae reddit, accusator quodammodo suus est, et ille defensor, qui contra dicit*). Therefore, we are no longer dealing with a *suasoria*, aimed at evaluating the opportunity for suicide, but with a *controversia*, whose purpose is to judge the past life of a person from the legal point of view.

<sup>34</sup> Sopat. *decl.* 51–60 and 68 (*RhG* VIII, pp. 306.20 – 320.20; 336.1 – 339.25 W.); Iul. Vict. *rhet.* 3. 1; Fortun. *rhet.* I. 17; I. 20; Sulp. Vict. *rhet.* 49 (343.24 – 344.6 H.).

<sup>35</sup> The *qualitas negotialis* is a *status* which aims at evaluating a proposed future fact in order to determine whether it should be adopted; from Hermogenes onwards, it represents the space accorded to deliberative oratory inside *status*-systems: Russell 1983, pp. 63–65; Calboli Montefusco 1986, pp. 99–106.

<sup>36</sup> Sulp. Vict. *rhet.* 58 (350.9–20 H.): *Cum causas mortis voluntariae reddit, putant quidam negotialem statum, quia quaeratur, ‘an ille debeat mori’, et quaestio quasi tota sit de futuro: sed si hoc est, et in iis causis, in quibus reus est aliquis, negotialis esse videatur; quaeritur enim et ibi, ‘an debeat ipse damnari’.* Hic porro de praeterito omnis est quaestio; ex his enim quae praecesserunt aestimandum est senatui, an petenti dare debeat moriendi potestatem. Videamus <num> rectius putemus statum huiusmodi controversiae ex eo quod contra dicitur proponi. Nam huiusmodi causae eandem naturam habent quam illae, ubi accusator et reus ex diversis partibus consistunt. Nam et qui causas mortis voluntariae reddit, accusator quodammodo suus est, et ille defensor, qui contra dicit. Inveniemus igitur aut remotivas esse huiusmodi causas aut deprecativas aut quasvis potius quam negotiales.

<sup>37</sup> Likewise, Quint. *inst.* VII. 4. 39 brings the *causa mortis voluntariae* into the field of *qualitas*.

In my opinion, this is exactly the perspective chosen by Augustine to address the present issue. I am not of course arguing that he was actually thinking of the treatment of *προσαγγελία* suggested by Sulpicius Victor; but it is certainly true that the *controversia* about Lucretia's purity is just part of a more general and complex strategy, somehow comparable to that described by Sulpicius. Rhetorically speaking, Lucretia can be assimilated to the person asking the Senate for permission to commit suicide: in order to understand whether she 'deserves' this permission (i.e. whether she took the right decision), it is necessary to evaluate her behaviour with respect to the rules of *pudicitia*; and there is no reason to grant the permission (i.e. to commit suicide) if the woman is (i.e. was) innocent (i.e. chaste).

#### 8. Conclusion: *Lucretia in the World of Sophistopolis*

Approaching the story of Lucretia, Augustine deploys all the weapons cached in his rhetorical arsenal to return fire on his rivals. Leaving any ethical, theological or philosophical implication momentarily aside (or, more precisely, moving them into the background), he performs a *controversia* in miniature and uses the rules and conventions of declamatory practice to question the value of one of the most important and undisputed *exempla virtutis* of Roman history.

In doing so, the Bishop of Hippo was certainly relying upon a well-established tradition, because – as we have seen – declamations based on Lucretia's story (just as on other historical characters or episodes) must have been a much more common school product than we can imagine. Furthermore, Augustine was surely aware of the advantages he could obtain by adopting a rhetorical perspective, as rhetoric is a powerful and neutral tool which allows one to argue *in utramque partem* about any kind of subject or issue. But above all, a *controversia* must have seemed to him the perfect weapon with which to challenge and beat his opponents at their own game, in order to show that Lucretia's suicide cannot be accepted from a pagan perspective either.

It is for these reasons that Augustine decides to introduce Lucretia into the complex, fanciful and somewhat disturbed

world of Sophistopolis:<sup>38</sup> a completely self-referential world, in which common logic has no place and everything is interpreted under the distorting lens of artificial and often bizarre rules; a world where laws can be used at will and such themes as suicide, *stuprum* and *adulterium* are everyday issues; a world with which Augustine – a former rhetorician in Carthage, Rome and Milan – was keenly familiar and where he was perfectly at ease.

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### *Abstract*

In *civ.* I. 19 Augustine offers a quite unconventional – and openly challenging – interpretation of the tale of Lucretia, in the context of the intellectual debate between Christians and pagans after the sack of Rome (410 AD). By creating a *controversia* in miniature (*utrum Lucretia adultera an casta iudicanda sit*) he goes so far as to doubt the heroine's chastity, but his real purpose is to question her decision to commit suicide, as suicide, from a rhetorical point of view, can only be justified as a result of misconduct; if one accepts Lucretia's chastity one cannot at the same time approve her decision to commit suicide. In doing so, Augustine uses the rules and conventions of declamatory practice as a weapon to challenge and beat his pagan opponents at their own game, and brings Lucretia into the complex, fanciful and somewhat disturbed world of Sophistopolis.

## THE DYNAMICS OF SENECA'S RECEPTION IN THE LATE ANCIENT CHRISTIAN TRADITION: SOME METHODOLOGICAL REMARKS

The most obscure stretch of the long path through which Seneca became one of the most important Latin writers to influence European civilization was likely the starting one, coinciding with the development of the Latin Fathers' literary production.

Indeed, the study of the relationship between Seneca and the Christian Tradition within the period extending from the Ancient Apologetics to Martin, bishop of Braga,<sup>1</sup> leads us to deal with some quite intriguing phenomena. For instance, the mysterious reading of Seneca's lost works, which represents a thick slice of his reception among the Fathers as a whole,<sup>2</sup> and besides, the embryonic stage of Senecan pseudo-epigraphic writings through which he will have increased medieval spirituality,<sup>3</sup> are involved here.

After Trillitzsch's masterly essay,<sup>4</sup> other more recent, specific surveys of Seneca's permanence in the Late Ancient Christian

<sup>1</sup> Sixth century AD. The last witness of circulation of Senecan works in the Ancient Age just before they plunged into deep oblivion.

<sup>2</sup> Evidence or fragments of Seneca's lost writings are likely found in the Fathers' works as follows: *De matrimonio* (by Jerome, *adv. Iov.*), *De superstitione* (by Augustine, *civ.*; Lactantius, *inst.* and Minucius), *Exhortationes* and *Libri moralis philosophiae* (by Lactantius, *inst.*), *De immatura morte* (Lactantius, *inst.*; Tertullian, *resurrect.* and *anim.*), *De forma mundi* (Cassiodorus, *inst.*). Furthermore, a fragment of Theophrast's lost work on friendship, quoted by Jerome's *In Micheam*, might have come through Seneca's *Quomodo amicitia continenda sit*. As far as Seneca's lost work is concerned, which Martin's *Formula vitae honestae* might have come from, I do not share scholars' common attribution to *De officiis* but am inclined to believe that Martin could have used the *Exhortationes*.

<sup>3</sup> Meerseemann 1973.

<sup>4</sup> Trillitzsch 1971.

Tradition have been composed.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, a huge amount of data have been gathered from scholars over the last forty years. Nonetheless, the entirety of scholars, with few exceptions, have been unable to validate (through formal markers i.e. lexemes or sentences) the numerous supposed correspondences that were sought out and detected between Seneca's writings and the Fathers' literary output. Therefore, despite the scholarly attempts, the relative bibliography in this field is bursting with unverifiable hypothesis, and the danger of falling into anonymous Stoicism or gnostic vagueness has not been avoided. To sum up, using Alfonso Traina's well-known definition referred to the question of Seneca's influence on Augustine's works, it is the wider-ranging issue about Seneca and the Christian Tradition that is still an 'unsolved problem'.<sup>6</sup>

In this essay, I aim to debate a methodological issue regarding a sort of a basic aporia in which the relationship between Seneca and the Christians seems to be deeply rooted. Actually, such an aporia, if correctly highlighted, might even constitute a kind of virtuous approach<sup>7</sup> to the more general question pertaining to how cultural patterns were transformed and transmitted in the Late Ancient Age.

What I aim to achieve is to fully rediscover that pervasive sense of 'familiarity' deeply affecting Senecan reception among Christian authors, so as to consider many dynamics of the latter as a form of an 'embodied' or 'personified' relationship.

The fullest evidence of this in Late Antiquity is the pseudo-epigraphic correspondence of St Paul and Seneca, hinging as it does upon mutual familiarity.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>5</sup> See for instance: Brugnoli 2000; Martina 2001.

<sup>6</sup> Traina 1987, p. 188.

<sup>7</sup> Speaking of 'aporia' and 'virtuous approach', I am alluding to the title of Mazzoli 2008 (though the issue I shall deal with here is completely different from his).

<sup>8</sup> *epist.* 1. 1–6 (passim) *Seneca Paulo salutem. [...] Erant enim quidam disciplinarum tuarum comites mecum [...] tui praesentiam optavimus; epist.* 4. 1–5 *Annaeo Senecae Paulus salutem. Quotiescumque litteras tuas audio, praesentiam tui cogito nec aliud existimo quam omni tempore te nobiscum esse. Cum primum itaque venire coeperis, invicem nos et de proximo videbimus.* The text is quoted according to Bocciolini Palagi 1978a from now on.



We can tell at once that the anonymous author of these letters widely uses the epistolary topic of the *parousia*, which indeed often recurred in Seneca's *Letters to Lucilius*, giving voice to the affective consonance between Seneca and his friend.<sup>9</sup>

In so drawing this literary pattern, the anonymous author actually embodies it as a sort of true event, which is precisely staged in the first letter of the collection. Here, indeed, what would have truly happened before is imagined as follows: Seneca says that he was walking with Lucilius in the *Horti Sallustiani*<sup>10</sup> when he met some followers of St Paul. Thanks to this chance encounter the opportunity arose for them to read some of St Paul's letters together, through which the Apostle seemed to have arisen among them in person. Furthermore, the presence of St Paul is also evoked precisely through a letter which, shortly after, Seneca is imagined to have written to the Apostle in order to make him very close.

It is therefore from the pseudo-epigraphic correspondence of St Paul and Seneca that we should start again, not by considering the numerous problems it has sparked (its authorship, dating, addressee, place in the genre of pseudepigraphic letters, uniform or stratified composition and so on<sup>11</sup>) but by asserting the basic aporia that sprang from it long ago.

According to Momigliano's authoritative opinion,<sup>12</sup> one of the oldest exegetical practices the Humanists achieved on Seneca's works in the fourteenth century pertained precisely to the pseudo-epigraphic correspondence with St Paul. The first

<sup>9</sup> Despite their distance, Seneca and Lucilius are constantly face to face, precisely thanks to the exchange of letters (see for instance *epist.* 40. 1; 55. 11; 67. 2).

<sup>10</sup> The *Horti* are the best *locus amoenus* for practising retirement in its noblest, pagan expression. This inspiring setting is of course a merely literary one, yet not free from anachronism nor inconsistency but actually alluding to the atmosphere of Cicero's dialogues (Bocciolini Palagi 1978, pp. 80–81).

<sup>11</sup> For a recent overview of the main questions related to this text see Mara 2001; Fürst – Fuhrer – Siegert – Walter 2006.

<sup>12</sup> Momigliano 1955, p. 23: 'Ritengo infatti probabile che l'idea di un Seneca cristiano non nacque nella mente dei soliti ingenui monaci medievali, ma fu il prodotto della riflessione critica dell'Umanesimo ancora immaturo. Per quel che io so, taluni umanisti italiani del XIV secolo [...] invece di accettare le lettere senza pensarci, cercarono di spiegarle e conclusero per la conversione, che fu dunque in qualche modo la prima interpretazione critica delle lettere'.

Humanists did not unconditionally accept the therein-represented familiarity between the Philosopher and the Apostle; nonetheless, they failed to disclaim what Augustine (*epist.* 153. 14) and Jerome (*vir. ill.* 12) had testified; hence, they attempted to justify the familiarity between Seneca and St Paul from an ideological point of view through the invention of Seneca's hidden Christianity.

This crucial attempt had some important consequences. Firstly, the interpretation of the pseudo-epigraphic correspondence's literary meaning has been so heavily misinterpreted up until recently, that it has often been read as an alleged symbol of Stoic presence in Christian Latin thought.<sup>13</sup>

Secondly, it is the history of Seneca's reception studies in its entirety that has been damaged by this misunderstanding, inasmuch as successive generations of scholars have repeatedly given rise to it over the centuries. Indeed, far too often has the exegetical practice in this field coincided with, or at least passed through, an ideological interpretation, so as to affirm, if no longer the conversion of Seneca to Christianity, then at least a spiritual agreement between him and Christian thought. This is true not only for those few people who sustained the authenticity of these letters and still do so, but also for all those who did not admit it, not rejecting its ideological charge and value, however.

Hence, a vicious circle was begun, affecting most studies. Some spiritual correspondences with Christian themes have been perceived in Seneca, therefore some textual evidence has been forced to show that Seneca's writings had been encompassed in those of the Fathers: no formal criteria, however, have previously been established in order to carry out a true, scientific investigation of an intertextual nature.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Bocciolini Palagi 1978a, pp. 50–51: 'I numerosissimi studi comparativi sullo Stoicismo e il Cristianesimo [...], ponendo l'epistolario astrattamente a simbolo del rapporto tra lo Stoicismo e il Cristianesimo, presupponevano aprioristicamente che lo scopo del falsario fosse proprio di concretizzare l'aspirazione ad una convergenza tra l'ideologia stoica e quella cristiana'.

<sup>14</sup> At best, in some authoritative essays (see, for instance, von Albrecht 2001), the Christian Tradition of the Ancient Age is involved in the issue through the medium of the Modern Age, on which the Christian Tradition explicitly

In conclusion, that personified relationship between Seneca and the Christians, as was represented by Late Antiquity, was laden with a foreign ideological meaning, from the Humanistic Age up to today. Vice-versa, it is precisely thanks to the pseudo-epigraphic correspondence between Seneca and St Paul that this particular relationship might be correctly rediscovered, and therefore used in order to effectively redefine the terms of the critical issue pertaining to Seneca's reception among the Fathers. Surely, it was a symbolic relationship, though neither abstract nor ideologically embedded: actually, we are dealing with a simple familiarity between Seneca and the Christians, based on the particular details of Seneca's biography.

This is precisely the point: coincidence of common place and time between three very important people at the height of their respective careers i.e. Seneca, the emperor's powerful minister and one of the most prestigious Latin *auctores*, Peter, Christ's heir, and Paul, the Apostle of the Pagans. Moreover, all three entered martyrdom under the emperor Nero.

This outstanding chronological and spatial synchrony was fully played out in the pseudo-epigraphic correspondence of Seneca and St Paul; other late ancient texts, however, were influenced by that synchrony. Among these, the passage of Lactantius' *Divinae Institutiones* (vi. 24. 13–14) must at least be mentioned; there it is claimed that Seneca might have been a *Dei veri cultor* if only a *dux verae sapientiae* had guided him. Beyond being a probable *terminus post quem*, very useful in dating St Paul and Seneca's letters as around mid-fourth century, this passage could also represent a *terminus propter quem* for them.<sup>15</sup>

Furthermore, the *notitia* of Jerome in the *De viris illustribus*,<sup>16</sup> which is in turn the *terminus ante quem* to date these letters, must

faced Seneca's thought and works. What is clear in such essays, however, is that we are not dealing with proper critical research on the Senecan reception among the Fathers, but rather with an analysis of that particular reading of Seneca which some late authors (i.e. Erasmus, Justus Lipsius and so on) have intentionally offered in comparison with the Fathers' spirituality.

<sup>15</sup> Mazzoli 2008, pp. 59–60.

<sup>16</sup> Hier. *vir. ill.* 12: *Lucius Annaeus Seneca Cordubensis, Sotionis Stoici discipulus et patruus Lucani poetae, continentissimae vitae fuit, quem non ponerem in catalogo sanctorum nisi me illae epistulae provocarent, quae leguntur a plurimis Pauli ad Senecam*

also be mentioned. Firstly, Jerome transforms that Senecan passage (*epist.* 108. 17–22) when the author speaks of the Pythagorism of his youth, into two biographical accounts (Seneca's tutorship by Sotion and his chaste life). Hence, as a character, Seneca fits perfectly with the Father's classification of three types of philosophers (the Socratic, the Pythagoric and the Cynic).

Secondly, when quoting the prestigious name of Seneca's nephew, Lucan the poet, Jerome might have also wanted to embrace the third branch of the *Annaei* in the history of Latin Christian literature, which he founded with the *De viris illustribus*. Indeed, the first branch, that of Anneus Novatus (Gallio after the adoption) had already been included in none other than the *Acts of the Apostles*, regarding St Paul.

To sum up, collocated as he is after the great divide of the Christian Revelation, Seneca was considered the most prestigious and suitable intellectual among Pagans for Christian culture, who might have had the possibility to come in contact with Christianity, both historically and concretely.

Therefore, he represented the Ancient Age bordering on the New Era, Paganism witnessing the foundation of Christianity as a Catholic religion at last (Peter and Paul's arrival in Rome).

This sufficed to make Seneca an icon in the Christian Tradition without, however, triggering an ideological, unreserved agreement with him (Augustine's mistrust of such a borderline Seneca gave clear voice to this contradiction).

Therefore, a more copious reception of Seneca's thought and writings than that of other authors did not necessarily occur. Actually, Cicero, Varro, Sallust, Vergil and Terence were more widespread in schools than Seneca. Regarding this point, a passage from Augustine's *Confessiones*<sup>17</sup> is often given as testimony to the fact that Seneca might have been well integrated in the contemporary *Bildung*. Nonetheless, this passage should be reassessed in its original context, where Faustus' lack of rhetorical

*et Senecae ad Paulum. In quibus, cum esset Neronis magister et illius temporis potentissimus, optare se dicit eius esse loci apud suos, cuius sit Paulus inter Christianos. Hic, ante biennium quam Petrus et Paulus martyrio coronaretur, a Nerone interfectus est.*

<sup>17</sup> Aug. *conf.* v. 6: *Et quia legerat aliquas Tullianas orationes et paucissimas Senecae libros et nonnulla poetarum et suae sectae si qua volumina Latine atque compositae conscripta erant.*

skills is attacked: hence, the reference to the *paucissimi libri* of Seneca, read by Faustus, might even more appropriately refer to Seneca the Elder.<sup>18</sup>

Furthermore, those authors are not borderline figures but are fully integrated in the Ancient world, so their permanence might have spread even more broadly than that of Seneca.<sup>19</sup>

To sum up, according to all that has been maintained up to now, the basic aporia originally shaping the relationship between Seneca and the Christians could be defined as follows: a special statute for Seneca as a figure, and not for the reception of his thought and writings, was then recognized. The latter has never constituted such a special issue to the extent that scholars, even today, feel exonerated from adopting the standard methodology currently required for intertextual research.

On this point, however, it should not be overlooked that a large part of Seneca's reception in the Ancient World as a whole pertained to his role as a public figure and outstanding witness of his own Age, rather than as a writer or thinker. Indeed, most evidence detected even in the works of pagan authors from the first century onwards concerns various details of his life rather than vestiges of his stylistic or philosophical heritage.<sup>20</sup>

Turning back to the Christian tradition once again, it might be advisable to mention another side of Seneca's reception, which the aporia, highlighted above, does not exhaust or fully express.

<sup>18</sup> As Bocciolini Palagi (1978a, pp. 98–103; 1978b, pp. 222–224) thoroughly demonstrated, the confusion between Seneca the Rhetorician and his son, Seneca the Philosopher, has been documented since the fourth century onwards. Among the oldest testimonies which might prove this confusion, is precisely the pseudo-correspondence of Seneca and St Paul, where the former not only plays the main role of a rhetoric adviser but is also called by St Paul (*epist.* 2. 8) *sensor sophista* i.e. 'teacher of ethics' (*sensor*) as well as 'rhetorician' (*sophista*).

<sup>19</sup> The depth to which the divide of the Revelation would have affected Christian authors' attitude to pagan writers, so that they might have reused the latter in a different way depending on whether they were born before or after Christ, could be perceived through the manifold shades of the literary memory and its functioning in Jerome's epistle 60 (see Mazzoli 2003–2004, pp. 175–177).

<sup>20</sup> Setaioli 2015, pp. 255–265.

We are dealing, in this case, with a small, well-defined core of themes and authors, in which Seneca's presence appears less vague because of more evident textual correspondences. The 'familiarity' implied above is in no way absent here, but more deeply involved with Senecan writings and thought. As a motto to this 'deeper reading', the saying Seneca *saepe noster*, used by Tertullian in the *De anima*,<sup>21</sup> could be appropriately assigned. Here, Tertullian is claiming that all natural properties of the soul are inherent as parts of its very substance, thus growing and developing accordingly. A passage from Seneca's *De beneficiis*<sup>22</sup> is echoed here, regarding the theory of the *semina* of all notions that are inborn in the mind, as well as the role of God as the teacher cultivating them. This is the only occurrence in the Fathers where *noster* (as is also the case of *meus*), applied to a classical author, establishes a Christian versus pagan instead of Latin versus Greek opposition.

A complex of topics, ascribable to a comprehensively pro-treptic realm in various ways, might be detected at the core of what we can define the 'deeper reading' of Seneca by the Fathers. Among these, the role of philosophy in human life as well as in gaining true wisdom, the question of coherence between life and teaching, the figure of the *sapiens*, his magnanimity and inner strength, the definition of God's nature and the need for a real, spiritual cult, the problem of distinguishing true from false virtues, and so on, might be easily registered.

However, since this paper is concerned with the general framework of Seneca's reception in the Ancient Christian Tradition, such a deeper reading cannot be tackled herein and is therefore deferred to another venue<sup>23</sup>. Instead, in order to sketch the main routes of this reception, the most famous judgment of Quintilian on Seneca, well-known in schools, could be useful for my aim.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Tert. *anim.* 20. 1.

<sup>22</sup> Sen. *ben.* iv. 6. 7.

<sup>23</sup> Torre 2015, 267–276.

<sup>24</sup> Quint. *inst.* x. 1. 125–131 (Calboli 1999). The Fathers reveal their knowledge of this: see, for instance, Lact. *div. inst.* v. 9. 18, where Quintilian's passage is quoted linked to a description of *vitia*, quite Senecan-like.

Seneca is the last in a long series of *auctores* recommended by Quintilian to future rhetoricians, in order to acquire the needed *copia verborum*; he is appreciated as the top of every literary genre, or a sort of encyclopedia for a liberal education. Hence, a non-meaningless detail might be that, in the pseudo-epigraphic correspondence with St Paul, Seneca claims to take care of the Apostle's progresses in the Latin language, so as to send him his own book entitled *De copia verborum*,<sup>25</sup> which is not otherwise known. Indeed, this detail could be not only a further clue to infer the increasing confusion between Seneca the Elder and his son from the fourth century onwards,<sup>26</sup> but also a likely allusion to Quintilian's judgment, acknowledging its role as favorite *accessus* to Seneca in the Christian Tradition.

Secondly, Quintilian cites Seneca at the end of the philosophers, though he does not place him as one; on the contrary, Seneca is accused of having insufficient *diligentia* in philosophy, and is thereby not claimed to be an intermediate through which Stoicism had come to Rome.

Indeed, Seneca was not such an intermediate for the Christians, or was only partly so at the most. Besides Jerome's biographical details, only in Lactantius is Seneca explicitly referred to as a Roman Stoic (and moreover a Stoic *acerrimus*, *acutissimus*):

More generally, it is Quintilian's canon of authors as a whole to be frequently echoed: for example, in Jerome's epistle to Pammachius (49. 13) the list of philosophers the Father holds up as examples of disputation style (*legite Platonem, Theophrastum, Xenophonta, Aristotelen et reliquos, qui de Socratis fonte manantes divisim cucurrere fluminibus*) follows the list of *Socratici*, whose rhetorical skills, as Quintilian says (*inst.* x. 1. 81–83), even Cicero would have benefited from.

<sup>25</sup> See *epist.* 9. 7–8 *Misi tibi librum de verborum copia. Vale, Paule carissime* (see also *Quint. inst.* xii. 10. 11, where *copia* is precisely claimed to be the distinctive quality of Seneca the Younger). It should be pointed out, however, that this alleged lost writing has nothing to do with the Senecan apocryphal work with the same title, which has been transmitted by several manuscripts since the twelfth century. The latter is a medieval *collage*, which, in scholars' opinion, cannot have been formed earlier than the eleventh century, consisting of an abridgement of Martin of Braga's *Formula vitae honestae* and several excerpts from *Letters to Lucilius* (for a complete overview of this issue, see Bocciolini Palagi 1978a, pp. 151–154). Also the title of the medieval work, however, might be precisely suggested by the above-mentioned passage of pseudo-epigraphic correspondence between Seneca and St Paul.

<sup>26</sup> The authorship of a lost *De verborum copia* could likely also be attributed to Seneca the Elder (see Bocciolini Palagi 1978a, pp. 151–154; Bocciolini Palagi 1978b, pp. 223–225 n. 2).

here, the school's label is required by the context (that section of the *Divinae Institutiones* in which Lactantius analyses the ancient philosophers' false opinions of the nature of God). In Tertullian, the Stoic label for Seneca might have been implicit, in that he was sometimes quoted as being in opposition to Epicurus. More generally, however, Seneca is considered a Pagan thinker, though not referred to as a Stoic.

Thanks to this assumption, another myth can be crumbled: the equivalence, taken for granted by many scholars, between Senecan reception and the permanence of Stoicism among the Fathers.

Sincerely speaking, however, considering the most recent approaches to the relationship between Stoicism and Christianity,<sup>27</sup> a new but indirect role for Seneca also might be critically found today.

Indeed, recent studies offer a new hermeneutic framework, through which that relationship could be described as a kind of osmosis between two systems of thought, starting in the second century AD. This osmosis, in turn, can be appropriately related to that complex pattern of rebuttals and refutations but also to the strategies of assimilation which both Stoicism and Platonism had already shared from the Hellenistic Age up to the Roman Age. Seneca himself contributed to the former osmosis, so that he might be assigned, with an indirect role, in the subsequent analogous assimilation of Stoicism on behalf of Christian thought.

Returning to Quintilian once again, Seneca is claimed to be an *egregius insectator vitiorum*: actually, in Late Antiquity, the reception of Seneca rotated around clusters of specific, moral topics (anger, superstition, continence, the wise man's steadfastness, the four virtues, capital sins and so on) as well as some individual Senecan works dedicated to these (for example, *De ira*, *De superstitione*, *De matrimonio*, *De constantia sapientis*).

Lastly, in Quintilian's opinion Seneca is the unrivalled representative of an aphoristic style. Indeed, the reception of his works seems to have been filtered by means of gnomologies,

<sup>27</sup> Fuhrer 2006. See also Rasimus – Engberg-Pedersen – Dunderberg 2010.



starting at least from the sixth century when the *Liber de moribus* (an anonymous compilation of Senecan sentences) and Martin of Braga's *Formula vitae honestae* were composed.

Actually, it was in the Medieval Age that Seneca became increasingly read and transmitted through apocryphal collections of *sententiae*, composed in part with original materials. Nonetheless, this process of breaking down Seneca's works to short *sententiae* could have easily started in Late Antiquity, judging by the appearance of many presumed quotations found in the Fathers, which are precisely shaped as aphorisms.

As far as the possible reception of Seneca's stylistic manner is concerned, however, the clearly negative judgment by Quintilian seems to have inhibited its revival also in Christian authors, at least up to the fourth century and beyond. Despite this, some Senecan features have been noted more than once: for example, they seem to appear in the new style of Ambrose's homilies as well as in the language devoted to introspection with which Augustine rewrote Platonic issues in an effective, moving style.<sup>28</sup> In this field, however, research remains to be carried out.

I shall now conclude by turning back to the pseudo-epigraphic correspondence between Seneca and St Paul once again i.e. the thread running through my own interpretation of the dynamics of Seneca's reception in the Christian tradition.

In the twelfth epistle, the Apostle tells Seneca that he is greatly embarrassed by the unusual letterheads of their correspondence, whereby both their names appear close together, whereas only the name of a member of the Roman Senate, as the Philosopher was, should have been written in a leading position. Seneca actually answers that he feels highly honored to read Paul's name close to his own in the heading of each letter.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Traina 1987.

<sup>29</sup> *epist.* 12. 1–3; 9–10 *Ave mi Paule carissime. Si mihi nominique meo vir tantus et a Deo dilectus omnibus modis, non dico fueris iunctus, sed necessario mixtus, <optume> actum erit de Seneca tuo [...]. Nam qui meus tuus apud te locus, qui tuus velim ut meus. Vale, mi Paule carissime.* Bocciolini Palagi 1978a, p. 181 translates as follows, stressing the twofold meaning of *locus*: 'Nelle tue lettere (*apud te*) il mio *locus* (cioè il mio posto, che può essere solo nel prescritto) è anche il tuo: magari il tuo *locus* (cioè il tuo prestigio) valesse anche per me (*ut meus*): potessi considerarlo come mio'.

In my opinion, the vicinity of Paul's and Seneca's names, inasmuch as it is emphasized by the mutual ceremony which the two characters of that fiction exchange, might vividly render the concept of 'familiarity' at the root of Seneca's reception among the Fathers.

Therefore, figuratively speaking, another last detail is worth considering, in order to clarify that this familiarity was provided with a symbolic though not abstract value. Regarding the arrangement of the nine Senecan manuscripts kept in the Biblioteca Ambrosiana, it has been pointed out that the pseudo-epigraphic correspondence occurs here as a kind of a prestigious heading, as if it had been intended to provide the compilations of Seneca's works with a veneer of respectability.<sup>30</sup>

As might be easily realized, in the manifold paths of the textual transmission the pseudo-epigraphic correspondence between Seneca and St Paul in itself became precisely a sort of heading of Senecan works. Thus, the ceremony which they played in the twelfth epistle might be considered to have turned into a practice of textual arrangement.

I must confess, at this point, that I cannot imagine a more basic and concrete kind of intertextuality than the tangible closeness of Seneca's texts to that of the pseudo-epigraphic correspondence with St Paul in the medieval manuscripts. This is, nonetheless, the most effective and lasting kind of transmission of cultural patterns which I know.

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<sup>30</sup> Navoni 2001 p. 166: 'In nessuno dei nove manoscritti ambrosiani che ci trasmettono il carteggio tra Seneca e San Paolo affiorano mai dubbi sulla sua autenticità: anzi, il carteggio viene pressoché sistematicamente adoperato come sigillo per conferire autorevolezza alle sillogi senecane in cui si trova inserito, quasi una specie di *commendatio*'.

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### *Abstract*

'Seneca and the Christian Tradition', a wide and challenging subject, lends itself well to different approaches and manifold readings. In this essay, a methodological issue is debated, regarding the pervasive sense of 'familiarity' deeply affecting Senecan reception among Christian authors as a whole, so as to consider many dynamics of the latter as a form of embodied or personified relationship. The fullest evidence of this in Late Antiquity is the pseudo-epigraphic correspondence of St Paul and Seneca, hinging as it does upon mutual familiarity. Hence, the paper's purpose is to give this pseudo-epigraphic work the role of a paradigm, very useful for correctly redefining that personified, symbolic relationship, and therefore effectively outlining the history of the critical issue of Seneca's reception among the Fathers. Furthermore, in order to sketch the main routes of Seneca's permanence in the late ancient Christian tradition, Quintilian's most famous judgment of Seneca (x. 1. 125–131), well-known in schools, will also be taken into consideration here.

HISTOIRES DE MOTS.  
À PROPOS DES ADJECTIFS *IMATILIS*,  
*VERNATILIS* ET *VENATILIS*  
DE CASSIOD. *VAR.* III. 53. 1 \*

Magnitudinis vestrae relatione comperimus aquilegum Romanam venisse de partibus Africanis, ubi ars ipsa pro locorum siccitate magno studio semper excolitur, qui aridis locis aquas dare possit imatiles ut beneficio suo habitari faciat loca nimia sterilitate siccata.<sup>1</sup>

C'est ainsi que commence la dernière lettre du Livre III<sup>e</sup> des *Variae* de Cassiodore, adressée au nom du roi Théodoric au *comes privatarum* Apronianus à propos de l'engagement d'un sourcier (*aquilegus*) : un spécialiste provenant de l'Afrique, qui aurait dû prêter ses services au bénéfice des propriétés royales dans la zone suburbaine de Rome.<sup>2</sup>

L'adjectif qui, d'après le texte critique de Mommsen (Berlin 1894) et de Fridh (Turnhout 1973), décrit les eaux que les techniques de l'*aquilegus* auraient dû procurer, *imatiles*, est un *hapax legomenon* et, vraisemblablement, une création de Cassiodore comme deux autres adjectifs en *-ilis*<sup>3</sup> attestés exclusivement dans les *Variae*, *costatilis* et *sudatilis*.<sup>4</sup> Dérivé de l'adjectif

\* Je remercie F. E. Consolino, L. Ceccarelli, le prof. V. Zarini et le prof. P. Flobert pour toutes les suggestions qu'ils m'ont très aimablement offertes.

<sup>1</sup> Cassiod. *var.* III. 53. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Cassiod. *var.* III. 53. 6.

<sup>3</sup> Voir Leumann 1917, p. 52 ss. et Leumann – Hofmann – Szantyr 1965, I, p. 348.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Zimmermann 1944, p. 10. *Costatilis*, dérivé du substantif *costa* (voir ThLL IV, col. 1085, 36–38), décrit une qualité de l'*echinus* (voir *var.* III. 48. 4 : *costatilis teneritudo*) ; *sudatilis*, du verbe *sudare* (voir Ernout – Meillet 1959, p. 662 s.), fait allusion à l'origine du *sucinum* (*var.* V. 2. 3 : *sudatile metallum*).

substantivé *imum* ou *ima*,<sup>5</sup> *imatilis* ('qui émerge du fond, qui sourd des profondeurs')<sup>6</sup> convient parfaitement à la nature des eaux en question : par définition, en effet, aux compétences des sourciers appartenait de découvrir des nappes d'eau souterraine<sup>7</sup> et, comme Cassiodore lui-même le dit plus loin dans la lettre, parmi les *indicia* de cette *ars*, celui de la fumée qui s'élève permet aux *aquilegi* de déterminer combien 'en profondeur (*in imum*) les eaux se cachent'.<sup>8</sup> Le choix textuel opéré par les deux éditeurs critiques n'est pas donc ici en discussion ; ce dont je voudrais traiter brièvement, ce sont plutôt les deux autres adjectifs que les vicissitudes du texte de Cassiodore ont produits au lieu de *imatilis* : deux adjectifs qui, comme *imatilis*, ne sont pas attestés ailleurs et dont l'un a eu un succès curieux. *Imatilis*, en effet, n'est pas une leçon transmise unanimement par les manuscrits : parmi les 11 manuscrits employés par les deux éditeurs

Aucun de ces trois néologismes cassiodoriens n'est enregistré par Leumann 1917, qui en revanche mentionne *venatilis* (voir infra). D'autres adjectifs en *-ilis* employés dans les *Variae* sont : a) dérivés de substantifs, *aquatilis* (iii. 48. 4 ; iii. 53. 2 ; v. 17. 2 ; ix. 6. 4 ; xii. 24. 3) et *umbratilis* (vi. 15. 2 ; vii. 10. 1), tous les deux employés en latin classique ; b) dérivés de verbes, *coctilis* (vii. 17. 1), *volatilis* (v. 17. 3) et les plus tardifs *consutilis* (v. 42. 8) et *erratilis* (i. 21. 3). Dans le reste de la production cassiodorienne, on trouve encore les classiques *ductilis* (6 fois), *flatilis* (1 fois), *saxatilis* (1 fois) et *sculptilis* (10 fois) ; *inflatilis* (2 fois), *conflatilis* (1 fois) et *reptilis* (2 fois), de création tardive. Sur tous ces adjectifs, voir Leumann 1917, p. 56 ss.

<sup>5</sup> Tous les deux employés plusieurs fois par Cassiodore : on trouve *imum* 4 fois dans les *Variae* et 8 fois dans l'*Expositio psalmodum* ; *ima* 3 fois dans les *Variae*, 1 fois dans le *De anima* et 10 fois dans l'*Expositio*. Cassiodore emploie aussi 3 fois l'adverbe *imitus*, de création relativement récente (cf. Zimmermann 1944, p. 64), 2 fois dans les *Variae* (ii. 39. 7 ; iii. 47. 5) et 1 fois dans l'*Expositio*.

<sup>6</sup> Blaise 1967, p. 406. Cf. Traube *apud Mommsen* 1894, p. 547 : '*imatilis* = ex imo emergens'.

<sup>7</sup> Voir Cassiod. *var.* iii. 53. 4 *Hanc scientiam sequentibus pulchre tradiderunt apud Graecos ille, apud Latinos Marcellus, qui non solum de subterraneis fluentis, sed de ipso quoque ore fontium sollicitè tractaverunt*. Les méthodes de recherche des eaux, rapidement résumées par Cassiodore, sont décrites en détail chez Plin. *nat.* xxxi. 43-49 et Vitr. viii. 1-5.

<sup>8</sup> Voir Cassiod. *var.* iii. 53. 3 *Sunt et alia huius artis indicia [...] Addunt etiam in columnae speciem conspici quendam tenuissimum fumum, qui quanta fuerit altitudine porrectus ad summum, tantum in imum latices latere cognoscunt*. Cf. aussi Cassiod. *var.* ii. 39. 7 (*Haec perennitas aquarum intellegendi praestat indicium per igneas terrae venas occultis meatibus influentem imitus in auras erumpere excocci fontis inriguam puritatem*), l'un des deux passages cités par Tross 1853 à l'appui de la leçon *imatilis* contre *venatilis* (voir infra, p. 302).

(*EFKLMNOPRX*λ), *imatiles* est la leçon de *KLPR*λ, tandis que les autres portent *vernátiles*.<sup>9</sup> *Vernátiles* est la leçon reçue dans l'*editio princeps* des *Variae* donnée par Mariangelo Accursio, imprimée à Augsbourg en 1533, et dans celle de Guillaume Fournier, imprimée à Paris en 1579. Au contraire, dans la première édition des *opera omnia* de Cassiodore donnée par dom Jean Garet, laquelle a été imprimée pour la première fois à Rouen en 1679 et ensuite reproduite fidèlement dans la série de la *Patrologie Latine* (PL LXIX, Paris 1865), les *aquae* sont dites *venátiles* d'après une conjecture de François Juret.<sup>10</sup> Comme Garet lui-même l'explique dans la préface, les notes de Juret au texte de Cassiodore lui avaient été transmises par Jean (III) Bouhier,<sup>11</sup> qui comptait parmi les volumes de sa bibliothèque une réimpression de l'édition de Fournier, datée de 1589, laquelle avait appartenue à Juret.<sup>12</sup> À la page 78 du volume, aujourd'hui conservé à la Médiathèque de Troyes sous la cote G-3-719, on lit cette note marginale renvoyant au terme *vernátiles*, écrite de la main de Juret : 'lego venátiles. id est aquas fluentes e vena perpetua'. *Venátiles* est donc une correction de *vernátiles* opérée par Juret, qui n'était pas satisfait de la leçon des manuscrits reçue sans commentaires par les premiers éditeurs de Cassiodore et qui, évidemment, ne connaissait pas l'existence de la variante *imatiles*.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Pour l'établissement du texte, Mommsen et Fridh se servent tous les deux des 10 manuscrits suivants : E = Laurentianus plut. 16 sin. (s. XIV) ; F = Laurentianus plut. 45.11 (s. XIV) ; K = Laurentianus Gaddianus 89 sup. 23 (s. XIII) ; L = Leidensis Vulcanianus 46 (s. XII) ; M = Montispeulanus schol. med. 294 (s. XII) ; N = Neapolitanus IV B 41 (s. XIII) ; O = Romanus Angelicanus 1527 (V 4.7) (s. XIII<sup>m</sup>) ; P = Vaticanus Palatinus 273 (s. XII<sup>ex</sup>) ; R = Monacensis lat. 13072 (s. XII) ; X = Montispeulanus schol. med. 4 (s. XII-XIII). Outre ces manuscrits, Fridh utilise le codex Lincopensis XXXVI B 46 (λ), du XII<sup>e</sup> siècle, que Mommsen ne connaissait pas (voir Fridh 1973, p. xxxvii et xl-xli). Les manuscrits *EFMNOX* corrompent aussi l'ordre correct des deux mots qui précèdent la variante en question, en portant *possit dare vernátiles*, et au paragraphe 3, au lieu de *laetificale*, un autre néologisme cassiodorien, ils portent *laeti facile* (voir Cassiod. var. III. 53. 3).

<sup>10</sup> Cf. la note de Garet : 'Id est aquas fluentes e vena perpetua. JUR. Alii, vernátiles' (PL LXIX, col. 609B).

<sup>11</sup> Cf. PL LXIX, col. 426B.

<sup>12</sup> Voir Regnèr 1986, pp. 50-51 et la note sur le frontispice du volume : 'Francisci Iureti est qui hunc olim librum cum manuscriptis membranarum contulit non tamen ubique integris, addit etiam varias suas coniecturas'.

<sup>13</sup> Voir infra.

Quel était le sens qu'Accursio et Fournier, mais aussi les copistes/lecteurs de Cassiodore avant eux, donnaient à *vernátiles*, on n'a pas la chance de le savoir; toutefois, l'association de l'eau au printemps étant fréquente, pour ne pas dire spontanée,<sup>14</sup> il est probable que l'expression *aquae vernátiles* amenait à rattacher l'adjectif au champ sémantique de *ver*. C'est justement parmi les dérivés de *ver* que *vernátilis* est enregistré dans l'édition du *Thesaurus linguae Latinae* de R. Estienne (Stephanus) donnée par Gesner (Leipzig 1749, iv, p. 273) : des traductions proposées du terme, 'frisch, jung; vigoureux, jeun', il ressort que *vernátilis* était considéré comme un dérivé notamment du verbe *vernare* dans son sens figuré. Le rattachement de *vernátilis* à *vernare* est opérée aussi dans la troisième édition du *Lexicon totius Latinitatis* de Forcellini (ci-après *LtL*), revue par Giuseppe Furlanetto (Padoue 1827-1831, iv, p. 623), où le mot *vernátilis*, qui manque dans les éditions précédentes, est enregistré suivi de la citation du passage de *var.* III. 53 et de la glose 'h.e. quae vernare faciant viridia': ce qui signifie qu'on interprétait *vernátilis* d'après le sens propre de *vernare*, mais en présupposant l'emploi transitif de ce verbe, lequel, au contraire, est ordinairement intransitif. L'hypothèse de l'emploi transitif de *vernare* dans un sens analogue à celui proposé dans le *LtL* a été avancée plus récemment, quoique avec grande précaution, dans le cas d'une *iunctura* semblable aux *aquae vernátiles* du passage cassiodorien, c'est-à-dire pour l'expression *vernantes undae* qui décrit les eaux du Nil dans la septième bucolique de Calpurnius Siculus : *in illo nascitur amne / qui sata riparum vernantibus irrigat undis*.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> À titre d'exemple, il n'est pas rare de trouver l'expression *vernae aquae* employée pour indiquer le phénomène bien connu des pluies printanières (Sen. *Tro.* 219; Plin. *nat.* ix. 159 et xi. 101; Prud. *c. Symm.* ii. 956). Il était également connu qu'au printemps les pluies fréquentes alimentaient puits et sources (voir par ex. Plin. *nat.* xxxi. 50 *fin.* et Vitruv. viii. 1. 7).

<sup>15</sup> Calp. *ed.* 7. 67-68. Cette même *iunctura* se trouve aussi dans le poème *In laudem solis* (voir AL 385. 19-20 SB = 389. 20-21 R : *Tunc placidum iacet omne mare et vernantibus undis / flumina*), comme le signale Castagna 1976, p. 261. De toute façon, il me semble peu probable qu'Accursio ou Fournier peuvent avoir associé les *aquae vernátiles* de Cassiodore aux *vernantes undae* de Calpurnius Siculus. En effet, *vernantibus* est la leçon des manuscrits *potiores* de Calpurnius, c'est-à-dire Neapolitanus V A 8 et Laurentianus Gaddianus plut. 90.12 inf. (tous les deux de la fin du xiv<sup>e</sup> siècle), ainsi que de deux autres manuscrits :



La plupart des traducteurs interprètent *vernantes undae* comme ‘ondes/eaux printanières’, en voyant donc dans le verbe *vernare* une allusion au printemps au sens propre;<sup>16</sup> au contraire, selon Lucia di Salvo, cette interprétation ne convient pas de façon convaincante au contexte puisque ‘lo straripamento del Nilo si verificava ogni anno nei mesi estivi [e] questo fenomeno era ben conosciuto dagli antichi’.<sup>17</sup> C’est pourquoi Mme Di Salvo considérait comme plus probable – et, à mon avis, avec raison – qu’ici *vernare* signifiait de façon générique ‘se renouveler, reprendre sa vigueur’, d’après un emploi figuré du verbe qui est largement attesté : en d’autres termes, *vernare* se référait ici tout simplement aux crues du Nil et *vernantes undae* voudrait donc dire ‘eaux en crue’.<sup>18</sup> À moins que – suggérait encore Mme Di Salvo – Calpurnius n’ait voulu opérer une innovation dans l’emploi de *vernare*, en lui donnant une valeur transitive et donc le sens de ‘qui rend fécond’. Cependant, la fragilité de cette hypothèse est admise implicitement par la savante elle-même,

le *codex vetustissimus* apporté de l’Allemagne par Taddeo Ugoletto et aujourd’hui perdu, qui a été collationné par Niccolò degli Angeli (Angelius) en 1492 dans les marges de Riccardianus 636, et le cod. Magliabechianus VII 1195 signalé par Castagna 1976. Cependant, au lieu de cette leçon, accueillie par tous les éditeurs critiques à partir de Glaeser 1842, dans toutes les éditions précédentes – de la *princeps* publiée à Rome en 1471 jusqu’à celle de Cabanet-Dupaty 1842 – on lit *venientibus*, la variante des manuscrits (la plupart du xv<sup>e</sup> siècle) de la famille, bien plus nombreuse, qui descend de l’archétype *V* (voir Di Salvo 1990, pp. 43-48). Pour la liste des éditions anciennes des bucoliques de Calpurnius Siculus, dont dix précèdent l’*editio princeps* des *Variae*, voir Di Salvo 1990, p. 9.

<sup>16</sup> Voir Verdière 1954, Korzeniewski 1971, Soraci 1981, Amat 1991, Vinchesi 1996, Di Lorenzo-Pellegrino 2008. Voir aussi J. W. Duff dans Duff 1934, qui interprète l’allusion au printemps au sens figuré (‘waters with spring-like renewal’).

<sup>17</sup> Di Salvo 1990, p. 124 renvoyant à des sources grecques (Herod. ii. 19 ; Diod. i. 38-41 ; Helioid. *Aethiop.* ii. 28) et à un vers de Tibulle (*fertilis aestiva Nilus abundat aqua*, Tib. i. 7. 22), auquel on peut ajouter aussi Sen. *epist.* 104. 15 (*Nilus aestivo incremento tumet*), Sen. *nat.* i. 1. 1 (*Nilus aestivis mensibus abundet*) et vi. 8. 3 (*Nili aestiva inundatio*), Manil. *astr.* iii. 271-73 (*per oras / quas rigat aestivis gravidus torrentibus amnis / Nilus et erumpens imitatur sidera mundi*) et Claud. *Ruf.* i. 185 (*Hinc bibat aestivum septeno gurgite Nilum*).

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Di Salvo 1990, p. 124 et la traduction à la p. 63 : ‘acque in piena’. Une interprétation analogue est sous-entendue aussi, à mon avis, dans la traduction de *vernantibus* par ‘straripanti’ chez Di Sipio 1935 citée par Di Salvo 1990, p. 124.

ne citant à son appui qu'un exemple très douteux, c'est-à-dire un passage tiré d'une épitaphe hexamétrique du recueil des *Carmina Latina Epigraphica* :

Ille ego qui vixi bis deno circite solis,  
flore genas tenero vernans et robore pollens  
miles eram.<sup>19</sup>

Dans ce cas, en effet, il très probable que l'accusatif *genas* n'est pas l'objet de *vernans* mais plutôt un accusatif de relation. En fait, une comparaison plus pertinente avec la *iunctura* de Calpurnius pourrait être un passage de l'*In Rufinum* de Claudien :

nec me latuere fluentes  
150 arboribus suci funestarumque potestas  
herbarum, quidquid letali gramine pollens  
Caucasus et Scythicae vernant in crimina rupes,  
quas legit Medea ferox et callida Circe.<sup>20</sup>

Mais comme l'accusatif en question ici est un pronom neutre, *quidquid*, on ne peut pas déterminer avec certitude si Claudien l'entendait comme objet de *vernare* ou bien comme accusatif de relation ou adverbial. De toute façon, même si l'on admet que dans le passage cité ci-dessus Claudien employait effectivement *vernare* au sens transitif,<sup>21</sup> il n'y pas de bases suffisantes pour soutenir l'hypothèse que Calpurnius Siculus faisait de même. À mon avis, donc, l'expression *vernantes undae* doit être interprétée suivant la première hypothèse de Mme Di Salvo, c'est-à-dire comme 'ondes en crue'. Quant aux *aquae vernatiles* du passage de Cassiodore, il est possible que dans ce cas aussi l'adjectif ait été rattaché à la même acception figurée du verbe *vernare* et interprété comme 'abondantes, copieuses'; cependant, puisque en latin médiéval on trouve des exemples sûrs, quoique sporadiques, de l'emploi transitif de *vernare*, aussi bien au sens

<sup>19</sup> CLE 409 = CIL IX, 4756.

<sup>20</sup> Claud. *Ruf.* I. 149-151 Hall.

<sup>21</sup> Ainsi Prenner 2007, p. 178, laquelle traduit *vernant* par 'nutrono'. La même interprétation de *vernare* est suggérée aussi par la traduction de Charlet 2000 : 'tout ce que le Caucase... et les rochers de Scythie font germer au printemps'. Au v. 152, au lieu de la conjecture de Postgate *in crimina*, reçue par Prenner (et par Hall avant elle), Charlet préfère la variante *in germine*.

propre qu'au sens figuré,<sup>22</sup> il me semble plus probable qu'à *vernatis* on pouvait donner une valeur causative, et que l'expression *aquae vernatiles* pouvait être interprétée comme 'eaux qui rendent luxuriants, féconds (les terrains)' ou, comme il est proposé dans le *LtT*, 'eaux qui font pousser (la végétation)'.

Cela n'est pourtant pas la seule interprétation possible de l'adjectif *vernatis*, car théoriquement il peut être rattaché aussi bien au champ sémantique de *ver* qu'à celui de *verna*. Quoique, à mon avis, le rattachement de *vernatis* à *ver* et *vernare* soit le plus probable, on ne peut pas exclure l'éventualité de son rattachement à *verna*, et en particulier à l'adjectif dérivé *vernaculus* dans le sens ample de 'indigène, du pays/lieu' et, par conséquent, qu'à l'expression *aquae vernatiles* on pouvait donner le sens de 'eaux du lieu':<sup>23</sup> en d'autre termes, il est possible qu'on inter-

<sup>22</sup> On trouve un exemple de *vernare* au sens propre régissant l'accusatif dans le III<sup>e</sup> livre des *Passiones BB. Iuliani et sociorum eius* de Audrade de Sens († 853) : *Tempore quo toto mundi per gaudia vixi, / non me tantus odor, quantus nunc, laetificavit. / Hortus amoenus enim sicut, quem lilia vernant / atque rosae, redoletque crocus seu balsama spirant, / cunctis sic olfacta bonis sum plena [...]* (Audrad. *carm.* III. 104–108 Traube = MGH PLAC III, p. 104). De l'emploi transitif de *vernare* au sens figuré, j'ai repéré deux exemples : le premier dans les vers d'Ermenrich d'Ellwangen († 874) que la plupart des manuscrits placent avant la *Vita Sualonis* composée par Ermenrich lui-même entre 833 et 842 (voir Holder-Egger dans MGH SS XV.1, pp. 151–153 et Löwe 1986, col. 2157) : *o bone Christe [...]* *quidquid in orbe / est bene cretum / te tenus vernat* (MGH SS XV.1, p. 155, 26–31) ; le second, bien plus tardif, dans le *De ordine mundi* imprimé par l'abbé Migne parmi les œuvres de Hildebert de Lavardin (1056–1133/1134) : *Tales athletas olim vetus attulit aetas, / per quos evulsi sunt hostes atque repulsi, / quos laus aeternat, quos modo gloria vernat* (Hild. *Cen. ord.* 385–387, PL CLXXI, col. 1231C). Le *De ordine mundi* est mentionné parmi les œuvres de Hildebert de Lavardin par Manitius 1931, p. 856 et in Rädle 2002, col. 76). Plus incertain, le texte transmis étant visiblement corrompu, est un autre exemple, tiré du premier poème de l'*Appendix* à l'édition des *Carmina Cantabrigiensia* de Strecker 1926 : *Pulcher valet ver in silva, florigera tempora, / quando humus fert erbarum copia titanica, / vernat silva frondosarum species virencia* (*carm. Cantabr. app.* 1, 5–7 Strecker = MGH SRG XL, p. 111). D'autres emplois transitifs de *vernare* émergent encore des lemmes dans W.-M. Maigne d'Arnis, *Lexicon manuale ad scriptores mediae et infimae Latinitatis*, ou *Recueil de mots de la Basse Latinité*, Paris 1866 (réimpr. anast. Hildesheim 1977), col. 2280 : 'vernare – Florere, canere, mûre, instruire ; fleurir, chanter, fortifier, garnir' ; et dans L. Diefenbach, *Glossarium Latino-Germanicum mediae et infimae Latinitatis*, Francofurti ad Moenum 1857 (réimpr. anast. Darmstadt 1973), p. 613 : 'vernare (*i. ornare, florere, lucere, letari* ...) ... zieren ... lustig sein, sein, machen'.

<sup>23</sup> Dans ce cas, on pourrait avoir fait aussi un rapprochement érudit entre les *aquae vernatiles* de Cassiodore et les *nativae aquae* de Properce (iv. 4. 3) ou les *indigenae aquae* de Valerius Flaccus (vi. 294).

prêtât *aquae vernatiles* comme eaux qui naissaient dans les terrains en question et, donc, qui ne devaient pas être amenées jusque là d'autres lieux pour satisfaire les exigences de l'agriculture.

Quel que fût le sens qu'Accursius et Fournier donnaient à *vernatiles*, comme on le disait plus haut, la leçon des manuscrits jusqu'alors connus ne convainquait pas François Juret. Ignorant l'existence de la variante *imatiles*, Juret a donc proposé une conjecture élégante, qui intervient légèrement sur le texte transmis et qui rend au passage son sens original : en effet, dans le sens que Juret donnait au terme *venatiles*, cet adjectif exprime la même notion que *imatiles*, tous les deux décrivant les eaux à chercher comme eaux provenant d'une source souterraine.

De même que *imatilis* (et *vernatilis*), *venatilis* n'est pas attesté ailleurs : ou, plus précisément, *venatilis* n'est pas attesté en tant qu'adjectif dérivé de *vena*, puisque, en fait, un adjectif formellement identique mais appartenant à tout autre champ sémantique est attesté au moins deux fois. À ma connaissance, l'attestation la plus ancienne est celle du *Liber Antimaquis*, autrement dit *Liber spiritualium operum Aristotelis* ou *Liber secretorum Hermetis*, version latine d'une brève sélection de sujets traités dans un large *corpus* arabe de textes hermétiques, réalisée peut-être entre les XII<sup>e</sup> et XIII<sup>e</sup> siècles<sup>24</sup> :

Spiritus Saturni divisio spiritus dextri habet de animalibus elephantes et ursos. Et spiritus sinister habet boves et canes venatiles nigros et mureligos nigros.<sup>25</sup>

Dans ce passage, comme on le voit, l'adjectif *venatiles* est sans aucun doute à rattacher au champ sémantique de *venari*, signifiant évidemment 'de chasse'. Au sens passif, c'est-à-dire référé aux animaux à chasser (*animalia venatilia*), ce même adjectif est attesté – c'est le second exemple que j'ai repéré – dans un document des *Regesta* du règne de Jean II de France, daté de 1353.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Voir Burnett 2001, p. 179.

<sup>25</sup> *Liber Antimaquis* 12, pp. 207,409 – 208,411.

<sup>26</sup> Voir le *Glossarium mediae et infimae Latinitatis* du Du Cange, s.v. *venatilis* : 'dicitur de fera quae venatu capitur, ut supra *venalis* 2. Charta ann. 1353. in

Il est fort probable que Juret, de même que la plupart de ses contemporains, ne connaissait pas l'existence de *venatilis* en tant qu'adjectif dérivé de *venari*; en tout cas, sa conjecture demeure légitime quand même, la langue latine présentant en effet un bon nombre d'adjectifs qui sont parfaitement identiques tout en appartenant à des champs sémantiques différents.<sup>27</sup> Ce qui est indiscutable est le succès de la création de Juret chez les lecteurs de Cassiodore, et non seulement chez eux, tandis que la leçon cassiodorienne authentique *imatilis* était tombée dans un profond oubli. En effet, *imatilis* n'est enregistré ni dans l'édition du *Thesaurus linguae Latinae* de Stephanus revue et augmentée par A. Birr (Bâle 1740-1743), où en revanche on trouve *vernatis* référé à Cassiod. var. III. 53,<sup>28</sup> ni dans le *LtL* (Padoue 1771), où, au contraire, *vernatis* manque lui aussi.<sup>29</sup> C'est dans la troisième édition du *LtL* (Padoue 1827-1831) qu'on introduit *vernatis* comme adjectif attesté par Cassiod. var. III. 53, mais avec la remarque 'Alii leg. venatiles, sc. e vena perpetuo fluentes'.<sup>30</sup> Dix ans plus tard, dans l'*Appendix*

Reg. 81 Chartoph. reg. ch. 589: *Apri, cervi et alia animalia venatilia dictae forestae nostrae*'.

<sup>27</sup> Voir, par ex., *aulicus*, dérivé de *aula* et de *aulos*; *aurosus*, de *aura* et de *aurum*; *citatus* du substantif *citrus* et de l'adverbe *citra*; *corneus*, de *cornu* et de *cornus*; *genuinus* de *genus* et de *gena*; *temporalis* de *tempus* = le temps et de *tempus* = la tempe; ou, encore, *claviger*, composé de *clava* et composé de *clavis*, tous les deux employés, par ex., par Ovide, l'un comme épithète d'Hercule et l'autre comme épithète de Janus. Et pour rester dans le sujet de la chasse, dans le latin médiéval, on trouve le mot *venalis* attesté comme adjectif dans le sens de *venationi idoneus* et comme substantif dans le sens de *spiculum venatorium* (voir Du Cange, s.vv. *venalis* 2 et *venalis* 1; Maigne d'Arnis (voir supra, n. 22), col. 2271; Jan Frederik Niermeyer – C. van de Kieft, *Mediae Latinitatis lexicon minus*, éd. remaniée par J. W. J. Burgers, Darmstadt 2002, s.v. *venalis*), tandis que en latin classique *venalis* est l'adjectif dérivé de *venum*, 'vente' (cf. Ernout – Meillet 1959, p. 721).

<sup>28</sup> Voir Roberti Stephani *Thesaurus linguae Latinae*, IV, p. 520 (Bâle 1743): 'vernatis, e. Cassiod. var. 3,53. Aridis locis aquas dare vernatiles'. *Imatilis* manque aussi dans l'édition du *Thesaurus* revue par Gesner (Leipzig 1749), où, en revanche, est enregistré *vernatis* (voir supra, p. 296).

<sup>29</sup> *Vernatis* manque dans la deuxième édition, augmentée, du *LtL* (Padoue 1805) de même que dans l'*Appendix* publiée quelques années plus tard (Padoue 1816), toutes les deux données par Giacomo Facciolati, qui avait déjà donné la première édition.

<sup>30</sup> Voir *LtL*, IV, p. 623 (éd. Padoue 1831): 'vernatis, e. Cassiod. 3. Variar. 53. Aquilegus qui aridis locis aquas possit dare vernatiles, ut beneficio

à cette édition est ajouté aussi le lemme *venatilis* avec la référence erronée à Cassiod. *var.* III. 13, lemme qui sera reproduit dans toutes les éditions successives.<sup>31</sup> À ma connaissance, la première mention de la variante *imatilis* date de 1853 et on la doit à L. Tross, qui avait pu collationner l'édition de Garet avec le cod. Leidenensis, le plus important parmi les manuscrits de la première partie des *Variae* qui portent cette variante.<sup>32</sup> Deux ans plus tard, dans l'édition française du lexique de W. Freund donnée par N. Theil, *imatilis* est toujours absent, tandis que le lemme *venatilis* offre un clair exemple du fait qu'au cours de sa transmission de lexique en lexique, on avait perdu la conscience que *venatilis* était une conjecture ou, pour mieux dire, une création de Juret douée d'un sens précis :

venatilis = venatilis, e, adj. qui jaillit d'une veine : – Aquae, eau de source Cassiod. *Variar.* 13, 83 [*sic*] cf. toutefois Du Cange qui cite *animalia venatilia*, ce qui donnerait au mot un autre sens. M. Quicherat conjecture que *venatiles aquae* equivaut peut-être à *aquae vestigabiles*.<sup>33</sup>

suo habitare faciat loca nimia sterilitate siccata. *h. e.* quae vernare faciant viridia. *Alii leg.* venatiles, *sc.* e vena perpetuo fluentes'.

<sup>31</sup> Voir *LtL*, *Appendix* (Padoue 1841), p. 182 : 'venatilis, e, adj. ad venam pertinens, qui ex vena provenit. Cassiod. 3 *Variar.* 13. Aquilegius (*sic*) qui aridis locis aquas possit dare venatiles' (*aquilegium*, variante du manuscrit K et aussi du codex Breslaviensis 62, est imprimé au lieu d'*aquilegum* dans les éditions de Accursio, de Fournier et de Garet). Cf. *LtL*, IV, p. 932 (éd. Padoue 1965, fac-similé de la IV<sup>e</sup> édition du *LtL*, donné par Francesco Corradini et Giuseppe Perin, Padoue 1864-1928, et réimprimée en 1940) et *LtL*, VI, p. 270 (éd. Prato 1860-1875, par Giuseppe De Vit).

<sup>32</sup> Voir Tross 1853, pp. III-IV et 16 et supra n. 9. Je remercie Lucio Ceccarelli pour cette information. Sur le Leidenensis, que Mommsen et Fridh considèrent le *codex optimus* pour les six premiers livres des *Variae*, voir Mommsen 1894, pp. XLVII-XLIX. Tross 1853, p. 16 défendait *imatilis* contre *venatiles*, mais sans préciser que *venatiles* était une conjecture et sans mentionner la variante *vernatiles*.

<sup>33</sup> [Wilhelm] Freund, *Grand dictionnaire de la langue latine*, traduit en français, revu sur les textes, et considérablement augmenté d'après les travaux lexicographiques et épigraphiques les plus récents, français et étrangers par Napoléon Theil, Paris 1855, p. 555. *Vernatilis* est enregistré un peu plus loin, encore avec une référence erronée (p. 565) : vernatilis, e *adj.* propre à faire pousser la verdure, Cassiod. *Variar.* 3, 56 (où d'autres lisent venatilis). Cf. Louis Quicherat, *Addenda lexicis Latinis*, Paris 1862, p. 307 : 'venatilis, e, adj. Qui ex vena provenit. Cassiod. *var.* 13, 3 [*sic*] Aquilegius, qui aridis locis aquas dare possit venatiles. – Nisi intelligendum *vestigabiles*; nam ap. *Cang.* vox significat, Qui venatu capitur (*animalia venatilia*)'.

D'après le lemme du *LtL* avec la référence erronée à *var.* III. 13, *venatilis* est devenu un adjectif cassiodorien,<sup>34</sup> accueilli en tant que tel dans les dictionnaires étymologiques de Ernout-Meillet et de Walde-Hofmann<sup>35</sup> et dans plusieurs dictionnaires de latin, même de publication récente, dans lesquels, au contraire, on ne trouve ni *imatilis* ni *vernatis*.<sup>36</sup> La mauvaise herbe, on le sait, a la vie dure, mais qui sait si ces quelques pages ne pourront contribuer au moins à limiter la dissémination à venir de l'existence présumée d'un adjectif *venatilis* attesté par Cassiodore, *var.* III. 13 (!).

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<sup>34</sup> Dans Wilhelm Freund, *Wörterbuch der Lateinischen Sprache*, Leipzig 1834–1840, on ne trouve ni *venatilis* ni *vernatis* et *sudatilis* non plus, un autre néologisme de Cassiodore (voir supra n. 4), enregistré, au contraire, par Furlanetto dans l'*Appendix* du *LtL* (Padoue 1841).

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Ernout – Meillet 1959, p. 719, *s.v.* *vena* et Walde – Hofmann 1954, II, p. 746, *s.v.* *vena*. Dans tous les deux dictionnaires manquent aussi bien *vernatis* que *imatilis*, mots qui, à ma connaissance, ne figurent pas non plus dans d'autres dictionnaires étymologiques.

<sup>36</sup> Le mot *venatilis* dans le sens de 'provenant d'une veine' et avec la référence erronée à Cassiod. *var.* III. 13 est enregistré, par ex., dans les dictionnaires de Ch. T. Lewis et Ch. Short (Oxford 1879, réimprimé plusieurs fois), de F. Gaffiot (1<sup>ère</sup> éd. 1934; éd. revue et augmentée sous la direction de Pierre Flobert, Paris 2000; édition italienne Torino 2010) et de G. B. Conte, E. Pianezzola et G. Ranucci (Firenze 2000). Si l'on ne le trouve pas dans le *Handwörterbuch* de K. E. Georges (Leipzig 1843, mais voir aussi les éditions suivantes), *venatilis* figure dans celui de R. Klotz (Braunschweig 1866<sup>4</sup>: 'Aus einer Ader entspringend, *aquae*, aus einer Wasserader, Cassiod. *var.* III. 13') et, quoique prudemment, il est enregistré aussi par Leumann 1917, p. 73 ('Hiernach auch *venatilis aqua* "Wasser aus Wasseradern" Cass. *var.* III. 53. 1 (unsicher)'). Aucun des dictionnaires mentionnés plus haut ne porte ni *imatilis* ni *vernatis*, qui manquent aussi dans l'*Oxford Latin Dictionary* (1<sup>ère</sup> éd. 1982; II<sup>e</sup> éd. 2012); au contraire, Blaise 1967, p. 839 porte *venatilis* avec la référence erronée à Cassiod. *var.* III. 13, tandis qu'il enregistre correctement *imatilis* (voir supra n. 5). *Imatilis* est enregistré correctement aussi dans Alexander Souter, *A Glossary of Later Latin*, Oxford 1949 (réimpr. 1996), p. 184 et dans le ThLL (VII.1, col. 414, 30–33).

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### Abstract

The manuscript tradition of Cassiod. *var.* III. 53. 1 attests two variant readings, both of which are hapax legomena: *imatiles* and *vernátiles*. *Imatiles* is chosen by Mommsen and Fridh, while *vernátiles* is the reading of the first editions of the *Variae*, the editio princeps by Accursius (Augsburg 1533) and the edition by Fornerius (Paris 1579). In his edition of Cassiodorus' opera omnia (Rouen 1679), dom Jean Garett accepts the conjecture *venátiles* proposed by François Juret (1553-1626). Like *imatilis* and *vernátillis*, the adjective *venátillis* is attested to nowhere, at least not with the meaning given it by Juret. This paper examines on the one hand the meaning(s) that readers and first editors of Cassiodorus could give to the word *vernátiles* (in particular to the expression *aquae vernátiles*), while on the other it traces the vicissitudes of the variant reading *imatiles* and, mainly, of Juret's conjecture, *venátiles*, which eventually turned into an adjective allegedly attested by Cassiod. *var.* III. 13 (sic).



MARTINA VENUTI

*SPOUDOGELOION,*  
HYPERBOLE AND MYTH  
IN FULGENTIUS' *MYTHOLOGIAE*

Fulgentius' *Mythologies* are a collection of fifty mythological fables introduced to the reader through a moralizing interpretation predominantly based on a (para)etymologic decomposition of proper names. The explanation offered by Fulgentius aims to disclose the allegorical meanings hidden under the Greek myths. A wide and complex prologue introduces the fables.<sup>1</sup>

The text met a great success during the Middle Ages; it is one of those fundamental 'bridge-texts', which had such a great importance in the transition from a mythological pagan culture to a moral Christian one. The fortune of *Mythologiae* declined during the Humanism and Renaissance, when the Fulgentian text was replaced by other works, first of all by the Boccaccio's *Genealogie deorum gentilium*, which were widely circulated during the Humanistic period, and whose *editio princeps* was printed by Vandelino da Spira in Venice, in 1472.<sup>2</sup>

The very negative judgment expressed by Comparetti in 1872<sup>3</sup> is a persuasive example of the reception reserved by scholars to Fulgentius between the end of the nineteenth and along the twentieth century; one of the most problematic points was (and actually still is) the identity of its author: in a certain sense, the debate around this question has been diverting the general attention from making other inquiries, first of all from trying to

<sup>1</sup> For a general introduction to Fulgentius, see the online bibliography edited by Gregory Hays (<http://people.virginia.edu/~bgh2n/fulgbib.html>).

<sup>2</sup> For an overview of the fortune of *Mythologiae*, see Wolff 2013, pp. 29–36.

<sup>3</sup> Comparetti 1872, p. 138.

read and question the texts, especially the text of *Mythologiae*.<sup>4</sup> However, in recent times a partial change of direction has come about: a number of papers and translations were published over the last years, allowing an easier access to the Fulgentian texts considered as authentic. Regarding *Mythologiae*, the French translation (with notes) published by Étienne Wolff and Philippe Dain in January 2013 is of particular significance, as it is the first proper translation of the text into a modern language, aside from an English version, quite free and not actually complete, provided by Whitbread 1971. Moreover, I take the liberty of referring to my own PhD dissertation (defended in 2009 and now available online),<sup>5</sup> which focuses on the Prologue of *Mythologiae* by offering a new text, a commentary and an Italian translation thereof; in addition, a new edition with English translation of *Mythologiae* has been announced by Gregory Hays. At the moment, however, the point of reference for the text is still the *Teubneriana* edition by Rudolph Helm (1898), from which I am citing here.

In this paper, I am trying to exemplify some specific processes realized by Fulgentius in dealing with myth and to underline, as it concerns the Prologue of *Mythologiae*, a typical structure, supported by a precise syntactic construction, where the myth, used at the basis for an ironic hyperbole, provides the author with the ‘exaggerating ingredient’ he needs to wake up the attention of his reader, arousing the curiosity and the laughter, with a persuasive intention which completely and typically suits to the rhetoric functions of a preface. Furthermore, my exemplification aims to throw light on the Fulgentian re-elaboration of the mythic material among the *fabulae* into a new original shape and to contribute to the (partial) understanding of the cultural horizon of this author.

<sup>4</sup> See e.g. Schanz-Hosius-Krüger 1920, p. 197; Langlois 1964, p. 104 (who refers to Lersch 1846); Whitbread 1971, p. 7. An introduction to the debate on Fulgentius’ identity is offered by Hays 2003; for an overview, see Venuti 2009, pp. 84–92 and Wolff 2009, pp. 11–14. The other surviving works by Fulgentius have been studied a little more, published and translated: see the online bibliography edited by Gregory Hays.

<sup>5</sup> See the following link: [http://dspace-unipr.cilea.it/bitstream/1889/1042/1/Tesi\\_Dottorato\\_M.Venuti.pdf](http://dspace-unipr.cilea.it/bitstream/1889/1042/1/Tesi_Dottorato_M.Venuti.pdf). I may also cite other contributions, which try to make the Prologue of *Mythologiae* more understandable and to analyse the constituent elements of the text, such as Venuti 2010, 2011, 2013.

## 1. Spoudogeloion and the Mythologic Hyperbole

The critical category I am referring to is the *spoudogeloion*, the mixture of serious and witty, a category peculiar to the so-called Menippean Satire, which is a literary genre connected by scholars to the Fulgentian Prologue.<sup>6</sup> Such category appears here in different ways, all of which are defined and recognizable, and which I have tried to identify and list:

- mythologic hyperbole: e.g. *myth.* 5. 1–6; *myth.* 9. 15–17; *myth.* 12. 13–20; this will be the object of present paper;
- self-irony: e.g. *myth.* 13. 25–14. 1: Calliope catches Fulgentius – who plays a leading role as a character of the Prologue – lying down, heavily snoring;
- ironic lowering of semi-divine figures: e.g. *myth.* 12. 20–21: Calliope unseemly burst out laughing; *myth.* 14. 13–14: one of the guides provided by Calliope in order to help Fulgentius in his philosophic undertaking, Urania, almost hits her big toe against the jamb of the door while gazing at the starry sky;
- parody: e.g. *myth.* 13. 6–17: one out of the two poetic writings inserted into the prologue displays a hexametrical composition, which is a clear parody of the great astronomic descriptions typical of the epic tradition.

Focusing now on what I have called mythologic hyperbole, I set forth a passage from the Prologue of *Mythologiae* (5. 1–6):

T1: Nam tributaria in dies conventio compulsantium pedibus limen proprium triverat nova indictionum ac momentanea proferens genera, quo, si Mida rex ex homine verterer, ut locupletes tactus rigens auri materia sequeretur, credo etiam Pactoli ipsius fluentia conductis frequentibus desiccassem.

In the first section of his Prologue Fulgentius describes the misery and the cultural desolation of his contemporary times. Material needs seem to be the only things of importance. The author tries to counter this general situation with the importance of the *ars dicendi* and withdraws from the *negotia* of the city to the land, looking for the necessary *otium*. Nevertheless, even here he is oppressed by duties and monetary disbursement; in order

<sup>6</sup> See Moretti 1998, p. 125; Relihan 1993, pp. 24, 152, 162; Venuti 2009, p. 96, and Wolff 2013, p. 28.

to describe to the reader the frequency and the extent of those duties, Fulgentius uses a comparison between himself and king Midas.

In that comparison, the mythological reference produces a number of immediate effects: on the one hand, it changes the tone and the perspective of the whole context, throwing the reader out of a (apparently) historical dimension to a mythic, out of time, world. On the other hand, it brings the reader closer to the text and his author. Fulgentius does not tell us the story of Midas in order to explain the comparison he has made; he takes it for granted that his reader already knows the myth, *ergo* that he immediately understands what he is saying. In this way Fulgentius creates a cultural tie with his public; in the same direction, the ironic exaggeration of the passage – where Midas actually does not simply and gently release his power into the water of Pactolus, but he rudely dries it up, without, however, satisfying the greed of the *compulsantes* to author's door – shows a winking by Fulgentius at his reader. And what is better than an ironic winking to form a sympathetic cultural-based alliance with the public?

Two more examples can be found at *myth.* 9. 15–17 (T2) and 12. 13–20 (T3):

T2: denique ita certando remittunt in mortem quo ferant Caronem citius obituro si collegio non donetur.

T3: Quaeso, – inquam – munifica Largitas, ne tu istam tuam Satiram cuius me dudum uadatum amore praedixeras temere nostris credas penetibus. Tam etenim liuens zelo sortitus sum ex affectu coniugium, ut, si hanc suis oblucentem ut pelicem uoluptatibus domo reppererit ita sulcatis ungue genis in Heliconem remittat necesse est, quo eius diluendis vulneribus Gorgonei ipsius fontis nequaquam fluentia sufficiant.

I will not dwell on the interpretation of these passages;<sup>7</sup> I am focusing here on the presence of those features that in my opinion make them clear examples of a 'Fulgentian mythologic hyperbole', as a subcategory of the *spoudogeloion*: the reference to the myth without a real explanation of it and with the effects

<sup>7</sup> For the first one see Wolff 2011–2012, pp. 111–112, and for the second one see Venuti 2013, pp. 192–193.

I described; the ironic exaggeration (in T2 and T3 emphasized by the use of *ipsius*) that arouses laughter in the public, and, last but not least, the syntactic construction (in expanded font in the texts) consisting of a consecutive sentence introduced by *quo*<sup>8</sup> and combined with a hypothetical sentence. A confirmation about the key of understanding of these passages is given by the author himself: in the text, Calliope reacts in both occasions with a sounding laugh: *hanc orationem risus mollior terminavit* (*myth.* 9. 17–18) and *Tum illa cachinnum quassans fragile conliso bis terque pulsu palmulae femore* (*myht.* 13. 20–21).<sup>9</sup>

## 2. Myth

As it concerns the re-elaboration of the mythological material, Midas is a figure that appears two more times along the *Mythologiae*, but each time the myth is offered through a different point of view.

The tenth fable of the second book (T4) is entirely dedicated to Midas and the river Pactolus.

T4: Fulg. *myth.* 50. 5–24

T5: Hyg. *fab.* 191

*Fabula Midae regis et Pactoli fluvii*

*REX MIDAS*

Mida rex Apollinem petit ut quicquid tetigisset aurum fieret; cumque promeruisset, munus in ultionem conuersus est, coepitque sui uoti effectum torqueri; nam quicquid tetigerat aurum statim efficiebatur. Erat ergo necessitas aurea locuplesque penuria; nam et cibus et potus rigens auri materia marmorabat. Itaque

Midas rex Mygdonius filius Matris deae a Timolo arbiter sumptus eo tempore, quo Apollo cum Marsya uel Pane fistula certavit. Quod cum Timolus victoriam Apollini daret, Midas dixit Marsyae potius dandam. Tunc Apollo indignatus Midae dixit: 'Quale cor in iudicando habuisti, tales et auriculas habebis'. Quibus

<sup>8</sup> For the use of *quo* instead of *ut* in consecutive sentences see Hays 2003, pp. 227–228; Venuti 2009, p. 99, and the following examples: *myth.* 3. 19; 5. 3; 6. 13; 6. 19; 8. 25; 9. 2; 9. 14; 9. 16.

<sup>9</sup> See Venuti 2013, pp. 193–194.

Apollinem petiit ut male desiderata converteret responsoque accepto, ut tertio caput sub Pactoli fluminis undas subderet; quo facto Pactolus deinceps arenas aureas trahere dicitur.

Sed evidenter poetae alluserunt argute avaritiam, illa videlicet causa, quod omnis appetitor avaritiae cum omnia pretio destinat fame moritur, quod et Mida rex erat; sed collecta pecuniarum suarum summa, ut Solocrates Cizicenus in libris historiae scribit, quod omni censu suo Mida rex Pactolum fluuium, qui in mare decurrere solitus erat, per innumerabiles meatus ad inrigandam provinciam derivavit suaeque expensa avaritia fluvium fertilem reddidit. Mida enim Graece quasi medenidon, id est nihil sciens; avarus enim tantum stultus est, ut sibi prodesse non norit.

auditis effecit, ut asininas haberet aures. Eo tempore Liber pater cum exercitum in Indiam duceret Silenus aberravit, quem Midas hospitio liberaliter accepit atque ducem dedit, qui eum in comitatum Liberi deduceret. At Midae Liber pater ob beneficium deoptandi dedit potestatem, ut, quicquid vellet, peteret a se. A quo Midas petiit, ut, quicquid tetigisset, aurum fieret. Quod cum impetrasset et in regiam venisset, quicquid tetigerat, aurum fiebat. Cum iam fame cruciaretur, petit a Libero, ut sibi speciosum donum eriperet; quem Liber iussit in flumine Pactolo se abluere, cuius corpus aquam cum tetigisset, facta est colore aureo; quod flumen nunc Chrysorrhoas appellatur in Lydia.

The story told here by Fulgentius, which represents only a portion of Midas' myth, shows a non-traditional variant (in expanded font in the text): *Mida rex Apollinem petit ut quicquid tetigisset aurum fieret* (myth. 50. 6–7). In fact, in the most common version of the myth<sup>10</sup> – the one we can read in Ovid (*met.* xi. 85–193, T6) and which was continued by others, for example by Hyginus (*fab.* 191, T5) – it was Dionysus, and not Apollo, who granted

<sup>10</sup> See Miller 1997; Kuhnert 1978. See also Serv. auct. *eccl.* 6. 13 and *Aen.* x. 142.



the king a choice of whatever reward he wished for. Midas asked that whatever he would have touched should be changed into gold, but, risking starvation, he begged to be freed by that power. Dionysus satisfied Midas' request and ordered him to wash in the river Pactolus, whose water and sands from that moment started to be rich of gold.<sup>11</sup>

T6: Ov. *met.* xi. 85–193

- Nec satis hoc Baccho est: ipsos quoque deserit agros  
cumque choro meliore sui vineta Timoli  
Pactolonque petit, quamvis non aureus illo  
tempore nec caris erat invidiosus harenis.  
Hunc adsueta cohors Satyri Bacchaeque frequentant  
90 at Silenus abest. Titubantem annisque meroque  
ruricolae cepere Phryges vinctumque coronis  
ad regem duxere Midan, cui Thracius Orpheus  
orgia tradiderat cum Cecropio Eumolpo.  
[...]  
Rex venit et iuveni Silenum reddit alumno.  
100 Huic deus optandi gratum, sed inutile fecit  
muneris arbitrium gaudens altore recepto.  
Ille male usurus donis ait: 'Effice, quidquid  
corpore contigero, fulvum vertatur in aurum'.  
Adnuit optatis nocituraque munera solvit  
105 Liber et indoluit, quod non meliora petisset.  
Laetus abit gaudetque malo Berecynthius heros  
pollicitique fidem tangendo singula temptat  
[...]  
Neve male optato circumlitus auro,  
'Vade' ait 'ad magnis vicinum Sardibus amnem  
perque iugum labentibus obviis undis  
carpe viam, donec venias ad fluminis ortus,  
140 spumigeroque tuum fonti, qua plurimus exit,  
subde caput corpusque simul, simul elue crimen'.  
Rex iussae succedit aquae; vis aurea tinxit  
flumen et humano de corpore cessit in amnem.  
Nunc quoque iam veteris percepto semine venae  
145 arua rigent auro madidis pallentia glaebris.  
Ille perosus opes silvas et rura colebat  
Panaque montanis habitantem semper in antris,

<sup>11</sup> Scherf 2000.

- pingue sed ingenium mansit, nocituraque, ut ante,  
 rursus erant domino stultae praecordia mentis.
- 150 Nam freta prospiciens late riget arduus alto  
 Tmolus in ascensu clivoque extensus utroque  
 Sardibus hinc, illinc paruis finitur Hypaepis.  
 Pan ibi dum teneris iactat sua nymphis  
 et leve cerata modulatur harundine carmen
- 155 ausus Apollineos prae se contemnere cantus,  
 iudice sub Tmolo certamen venit ad inpar.  
 Monte suo senior iudex consedit et aures  
 Liberat arboribus...  
 [...]
- Pana iubet Tmolus citharae submittere cannas.  
 Iudicium sanctique placet sententia montis  
 omnibus; arguitur tamen atque iniusta vocatur  
 unius sermone Midae. Nec Delius aures
- 175 humanam stolidas patitur retinere figuram,  
 sed trahit in spatium villisque albertibus inplet  
 instabilesque facit et dat posse moveri;  
 cetera sunt hominis: partem damnatur in unam  
 induiturque aures lente gradientis aselli.
- 180 Ille quidem celare cupit turpique pudore  
 tempora purpureis temptat velare tiaris;  
 sed solitus longos ferro resecare capillos  
 Viderat hoc famulus; qui cum nec prodere visum  
 dedecus auderet cupiens efferre sub auras
- 185 nec posset reticere tamen, secedit humumque  
 effodit et, domini quales aspexerit aures,  
 voce refert parva terraeque innummurat haustae  
 indiciumque suae vocis tellure regesta  
 obruit et scrobibus tacitus discedit opertis.
- 190 Creber harundinibus tremulis ibi surgere lucus  
 coepit et, ut primum pleno maturuit anno,  
 prodidit agricolam: leni nam motus ab austro  
 obruta verba refert dominique coarguit aures.

Also the ‘historic detail’ added in the second part of the *fabula* (*myth.* 50. 17–23), where it is said that Midas divided the river Pactolus into several canals in order to irrigate the region and make it fertile, seems to be doubtful, as it is supported by the *auctoritas* of an uncertain *Solocrates Cizicenus*,<sup>12</sup> who is commonly

<sup>12</sup> See Baldwin 1988, p. 54 and Wolff 2013, p. 162 n. 92.

considered to be one of the so-called 'false quotations' of Fulgentius.<sup>13</sup>

In the Fulgentian fable (T4) Midas as a greedy man (*avarus*) is clearly, and a priori, morally condemned by the author. Moreover, Midas' greed is the only characteristic on which the mythologic hyperbole of the Prologue is focused, an hyperbole which is connected to this fable also by a lexical evocation (T1: *ut locupletes tactus rigens auri materia sequeretur* / T4: *Erat ergo necessitas aurea locuplesque penuria; nam et cibus et potus rigens auri materia marmorabat*). On the other hand, if we look at the Ovidian text (T6), particularly at the passages in expanded font (e.g. vv. 100 ff., and 148–149), it appears that it is the stupidity of Midas, rather than his greed, to be highlighted and mocked by Ovid; a stupidity that seems to be, however, kindly accepted by Bacchus (vv. 104–105) and by the author himself. In Fulgentius' explanation, instead, Midas is certainly a stupid man, but his stupidity is caused by his greed, which definitely must be condemned.<sup>14</sup>

Midas appears a second time in *Mythologiae* in the ninth fable of the third book, the *fabula Apollinis et Marsyae* (T7).

T7: Fulg. *myth.* 73. 11–77. 2

*Fabula Apollinis et Marsyae*

T8: Hyg. *fab.* 165

MARSYAS

Minerva ex osse tibias invenit,  
de quibus cum in conuiuio deorum  
cecinisset eiusque tumentes  
buccas dii omnes inrisissent, illa  
ad Tritonam paludem pergens  
in aqua faciem suam speculata,  
dum turpia adiudicasset buccarum  
inflammata, tibias iecit.  
Quibus Marsyas repertis  
doctior factus Apollinem  
concertaturus de canti-

Minerva tibias dicitur prima ex  
osse cervino fecisse et ad epulum  
deorum cantatum venisse.  
Iuno et Venus cum eam iriderent,  
quod et caesia erat et buccas  
inflaret, foeda visa et in cantu  
irrisa in Idam silvam ad fontem  
venit, ibique cantans in aqua se  
aspexit et vidit se merito irrisam;  
unde tibias ibi abiecit et imprecata  
est, ut, quisquis eas sustulisset,

<sup>13</sup> For an overview of the authors quoted by Fulgentius and of the connected critical problems, see e.g. Costanza 1956a and 1956b; Ciaffi 1963; Magno 1978; Vinchesi 1981; Baldwin 1988; Bisanti 1991; Hays 1996, pp. 180–220; Mattiacci 2003; Ferguson 2006.

<sup>14</sup> The moral and allegoric interpretation being a distinguishing mark of the Late Latin 'school': see Gioseffi 2005, p. 284 ff.

bus provocavit. [Qui] sibi Midam regem iudicem deligunt. Quem Apollo, cur non recte iudicasset, asinis auribus depravavit. Ille criminis sui notam tonsori tantum ostendit praecipiens ei ut, si crimen eius celaret, eum participem regni efficeret. Ille in terram fodivit et secretum domini sui in defosso terrae dixit et operuit; in eodem loco calamus natus est, unde sibi pastor tibiam faciens – quae cum percutiebatur dicebat: Mida rex aures asininas habet, nihilominus quod ex terra conceperat [calamus caneat]. Unde et Petronius Arbiter ait:

‘Sic commissa verens avidus reserare minister fodit humum regisque latentes prodidit aures; concepit nam terra sonum, calamique loquentes invenere Midam qualem conceperat index’.

Nunc ergo huius mysticae fabulae interiorum cerebrum inquiramus [...]

Sed his duobus certantibus Mida rex residet; Mida enim Graece quasi medenidon dicitur, quod nos Latine nihil sciens dicimus. Ideo etiam et asininis auribus dicitur; quia omnis discernendi ignarus nihil differt ab asino.

gravi afficeretur supplicio. Quas Marsyas Oeagri filius pastor unus e satyris invenit, quibus assidue commeletando sonum suaviorem in dies faciebat, adeo ut Apollinem ad citharae cantum in certamen provocaret. Quo ut Apollo venit, Musas iudices sumpserunt, et cum iam Marsyas inde victor discederet, Apollo citharam versabat idemque sonus erat; quod Marsya tibiis facere non potuit. Itaque Apollo victum Marsyan ad arborem religatum Scythae tradidit, qui cutem ei membratim separavit; reliquum corpus discipulo Olympo sepulturae tradidit, e cuius sanguine flumen Marsyas est appellatum.

As in the first case, the Fulgentian story shows a number of peculiar features and diversions from the traditional version of the myth, or at least from a part of the tradition (see passages in expanded font in the text): Fulgentius says that Midas is elected as a judge in a musical contest between Apollo and Marsyas. Instead, in the Ovidian text (T6), where the episode immediately follows the story of Midas-Dionysus and the river Pactolus, the contest takes place between Apollo and Pan, and is judged by Tmolus, the mountain-god who stands on the banks of the river Pactolus itself (cf. *Ov. met.* xi. 85). Tmolus awards the victory to Apollo. Midas, who by chance finds himself nearby, claims that Tmolus' decision was unjust; Apollo punishes him by transforming his ears into donkey's ears. Hyginus (T8) states that the contest took place between Apollo and Marsyas, likewise in Fulgentius, but that they were judged by the Muses; nevertheless Hyginus himself in another fable (*fab.* 191, T5) acknowledges that there is uncertainty: he says that Apollo competed with Marsyas *or* with Pan, and that Midas was asked by Tmolus to join him as a judge in the contest. Anyway, because of his stupidity, Midas is punished by Apollo with donkey's ears. Here Hyginus interrupts his fable. Ovid (*met.* xi. 180 ff.) goes on: the king attempts to hide his shame, but his barber discovers the secret and whispers the story into a hole in the ground, from which some reeds grow and, moved by the wind, repeatedly whisper Midas' secret. The Fulgentian text adds in the last part of the fable a small variation, that is functional to the following explanation and that moves away from the Ovidian version: Fulgentius says that Midas promised his barber a part of his kingdom in return for his silence; furthermore, as in the traditional version of the myth, he says that from the hole dug in the ground grew some reeds, but that these reeds are not simply moved by the wind as in the Ovidian and Petronian texts,<sup>15</sup> but used by a shepherd to make a flute,<sup>16</sup> that plays the words: 'King Midas has donkey's ears!'. Referring to this

<sup>15</sup> For the latter, see the fragment quoted by Fulgentius at T7.

<sup>16</sup> Interesting to notice – but impossible in this paper to follow the folkloric theme through the centuries – that this motif comes up to the Mahler's *Klagende Lied*.

Fulgentian version, Hays 2013, p. 318 underlines a discrepancy in the use of the verb *percutiebatur*, ‘regularly (and naturally) used of stringed instruments, but never elsewhere of a *tibia*. [...] Is Fulgentius conflating two incompatible versions? Or is he embroidering on his own account?’. Furthermore, in the incipit of the Fulgentian fable it is said that Minerva made the first flute out of animals’ bones, a story to which Ovid simply alludes through a single adjective in a verse of the sixth book (*met.* vi. 384: *Quem Tritoniaca Latous harundine victum*); other traditional sources, instead, refer to this episode in detail: for example Apollodorus (*bibl.* i. 4. 2) or again Hyginus, in his *fab.* 165 (T8), which in the first part almost entirely recalls the Fulgentian text (T7). In addition, in this fable Fulgentius quotes Petronius, a much more important *auctor* compared to the Solistrates cited at T4, for whose tradition the author of *Mythologiae* is considered a reliable witness.

Another interesting aspect to be analysed is the final interpretation of the myth given by Fulgentius and based on the para-etymologic decomposition of Midas’ name. In the texts I proposed, the Greek-based etymology applied at T4 (*Mida enim Graece quasi medenidon dicitur, quod nos Latine nihil sciens dicimus. Ideo etiam et asininis auribus dicitur; quia omnis discernendi ignarus nihil differt ab asino*) perfectly corresponds to the one we found at T7 (*Mida enim Graece quasi medenidon, id est nihil sciens; avarus enim tantum stultus est, ut sibi prodesse non norit*), something that does not always happen in the Fulgentian fables.<sup>17</sup> Midas is found guilty of two ‘sins’, *avaritia* and *stultitia*: at T7 his statement against Apollo and the consequent shame of donkey’s ears are clear proof of his inborn stupidity. According to the etymology proposed by Fulgentius, Midas is in fact *nihil sciens*. At T4, the author depicts Midas as *avarus* and connects the etymology *medenidon/nihil sciens* with the figure of a greedy man by saying that *avarus enim tantum stultus est, ut sibi prodesse non norit*. Between the two sins, however, Midas’ *avaritia* appears

<sup>17</sup> Sometimes the author provides different etymologic decompositions for the same proper name: see e.g. *myth.* 18. 19 vs. *myth.* 38. 15–16, or *myth.* 65. 8–9 vs. *myth.* 66. 15.

again to be predominant and clearly much more regrettable (by the author and, consequently by the reader, by us) than his stupidity.

### 3. Conclusion

Several issues and subjects relating to the text of *Mythologiae* remain of course unresolved, starting from the textual *lectio* with its literal and allegoric meanings, and including more general aspects such as the 'library of Fulgentius', his use of literary sources, his target, and his identity. I hope, however, to have given an insight into Fulgentius' use of myth, which draws from traditional sources, but shows also a clear, and original re-elaboration of such sources. The afore-mentioned re-elaboration of myth finds perhaps<sup>18</sup> its roots in the use of mythographic handbooks and in the practice of rhetorical compositions, but goes beyond that and results in a cultural product with a proper and complex identity, which met a great and lasting success during the following centuries. The myth's presentation is functional to the allegoric interpretation; in addition, the myth is used by Fulgentius to create an intellectual (and moral) connection with his reader thanks to the combination of serious and witty highlighted in the Prologue. The 'mythologic hyperbole' is just one of the subcategories of the *spoudogeloion*, consciously used by Fulgentius as persuasive tools in his rhetorical strategy. Such feature puts the Fulgentian text into a strict dialogue with the literary genre of the so-called Menippean Satire and especially with the work by Martianus Capella. But this is another story.

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<sup>18</sup> See Hays 2013, p. 311 ff.

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*Abstract*

In the first section of the paper, reference is made to the *spoudogeloion* (the mixture of seriousness and wit), a category peculiar to so-called Menippean Satire, a literary genre scholars have connected to Fulgentius' prologue. This category can be shown to appear in the text in different ways and special attention is focused on what might be called 'mythological hyperbole'. In the second section, Fulgentius' original reworking of mythological material is analyzed, focusing on the figure of Midas – who appears once in the prologue and twice among the fables – and comparing the Fulgentian version of this myth with 'traditional' sources such as Ovid and Hyginus.

SECTION III

THE TRANSMISSION OF THE  
CULTURAL HERITAGE: SCHOOL,  
TEXTS, AND PARATEXTS



## MACROBIUS AND SERVIUS: COMMENTING STRATEGIES IN COMPARISON

Servius' exegetical work and an extensive part of Macrobius' *Saturnalia* cover the same subject, Vergil and his poems. This identical topic is approached in very different manners, however.<sup>1</sup> Servius wrote a long verse-by-verse commentary, with an introduction covering Vergil's life, works and literary models, following in it the grammarian tradition; he explained Vergilian poems at several levels, remarking on language, punctuation, uncertain readings, rhetorical figures, myth and ancient costumes; he probably addressed schoolboys<sup>2</sup> or, as Peter K. Marshall has stated, other teachers.<sup>3</sup> Macrobius followed another traditional genre, the erudite banquet, the sympotic dialogue dating back to Plato;<sup>4</sup> as a consequence, his work consists mainly of the speeches given by the participants, each on a different subject, during that feast. Thus, he created a fictional audience, a group of intellectuals who were not interested in a line-by-line explanation, but rather were willing to listen to discourses about specific aspects of Vergil's poetry. The different structures of the two works implied different treatments and approaches to the subject matter. This paper will examine the commentary on two passages from the *Aeneid* and one from the *Georgics*,

<sup>1</sup> On the relation, also chronological, between Servius' commentary and Macrobius' work see Cameron 2011, pp. 247–252.

<sup>2</sup> Kaster 1988, pp. 169–170.

<sup>3</sup> Marshall 1997.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Marinone 1967, p. 30; Goldlust 2007; Kaster 2011, pp. xxxvi–xxxviii.

in order to enhance the differences between Servius' and Macrobius' art of commenting.<sup>5</sup>

### 1. *A Rhetorical Issue*

In *Aen.* vii. 293–322 Juno utters her rage against Aeneas, who is going to settle in Latium in spite of her efforts to stop him.<sup>6</sup> The monologue is commented on by Macrobius with regards to its rhetorical efficacy, whereas Servius offers a line-by-line interpretative reading.

In *Sat.* iv it is probably Eusebius speaking about Vergil's great rhetorical ability.<sup>7</sup> Among other topics, he examines the *oratio pathetica*, an emotional speech aimed at producing indignation and pity (*Sat.* iv. 2. 1); as for the first case, indignation, the sentiment must be expressed abruptly from the beginning and be described, during the whole speech, with brief sentences and frequent shifts in the figures, so as to give a full idea of anger (*Sat.* iv. 2. 2–3). Juno's monologue is taken as an appropriate example of this sort of *oratio*. Eusebius comments on its several small parts and shows how Vergil has succeeded in conveying the rage of the goddess. According to the definition given by Eusebius himself, her monologue starts with an exclamation (*ecphonesis*) and with *breves interrogantiunculae*, followed by an overstatement (*hyperbole*) and irony; it then continues with a brief complaint and another overstatement; other *dispersae querelae* are joined to an *argumentum a minore* in order to raise the pathos; the speech ends with an emotional confession of loss (*vincor ab Aenea*, vii. 310), but immediately afterwards Juno swears she will harm her enemies and finishes the *oratio* with a curse – as it is *proprium irascentis*.

This short summary of Eusebius' comment shows that the orator's interest is entirely focused on the rhetorical side of the

<sup>5</sup> In this paper the *Aeneid* quotations are taken from Conte 2005 and those of the *Georgics* from Geymonat 2008. The commentary by Servius follows Thilo – Hagen 1878–1887, the text of the *Saturnalia* is taken from Kaster 2011.

<sup>6</sup> On this monologue cf. Hight 1972, pp. 267–268, and Horsfall 2000, p. 208.

<sup>7</sup> On the identification of the character speaking in *Sat.* iv cf. Kaster 2011, pp. II–LIII. On the figures of speech in late antiquity cf. Torzi 2000 and 2007.

monologue. At the erudite banquet described in the *Saturnalia*, each participant may be seen as an actor playing a fixed role; each character, then, is expected to make a speech coherent with the role he is called on to play and consistent with his cultural studies; as a consequence, every orator must say what he is asked to say without expanding on other topics or inserting comments and ideas outside his own limited competence. This narrative (and commenting) strategy is made clear by confronting Eusebius' talk and that of Rufius Albinus in *Sat.* vi. Albinus discusses Vergil's borrowings from ancient Roman authors and quotes a couplet from Ennius' *Annales*, which is supposed to be the model for *Aen.* vii. 294–296 (*Sat.* vi. 1. 60 = 344–345 Sk.):

Ennius in decimo, cum de Pergamis loqueretur: 'Quae neque Dardaniis campis potuere perire; nec, cum capta, capi nec, cum combusta, cremari'.

Macrobius ingeniously places the remark, so to speak, in the right place i.e. Albinus' speech on Vergil's literary debts to earlier Latin poets. Inserted in Eusebius' *oratio*, it would have been pointless, pleonastic and not consistent with his specific competence; in addition, it would distract listeners at the banquet and readers from the point that the orator (and Macrobius) wants to demonstrate.

Servius' commentary on the same lines shows a different style and presumably aims at different goals. His main purpose is to explain the poetic text at linguistic, grammatical and mythological levels, without pointing solely to rhetorical issues; according to this method, he surveys Juno's monologue line by line and word by word, focusing on those elements that he considers worth commenting on. Thus, Servius explains single words (*fatis* at l. 293 as *voluntatibus*; *infelix* at l. 309 with the meaning of *nocens*), whole sentences (*at credo mea numina tandem* – l. 297 – is explained *nec fatigata destiti, nec satiata requievi*); gives a scientific interpretation of the goddess (ll. 300 and 311: Juno is seen *per phisiologiam* as the personification of *imbres, tonitrua, tempestates* and *aer*<sup>8</sup>); makes philological statements (l. 307: *haec vera lectio* about the choice of *Calydone* instead of *Calydona*); reports

<sup>8</sup> On this topic cf. Delvigo 2011.

Greek myths to clarify Juno's speech (ll. 304, 306, 320). Only at l. 318 does Servius make a rhetorical remark and say that Juno's threat to give Trojan and Rutulian blood to Lavinia as a dowry is *ambitiosa execratio*.

Among these annotations, one turns out to be particularly interesting as it suggests a difficulty in the explication of l. 295. The second of the *interrogatiunculae* which Eusebius points out as being typical of the *oratio pathetica* expresses Juno's anger (*Aen.* vii. 294–296):

Num Sigeis occumbere campis,  
num capti potuere capi? Num incensa cremavit  
Troia viros?

Juno is regretting that, although Troy was burned and its heroes died or were captured, Aeneas and his men are not only still alive but are even founding a new city. Servius remarks on the angry tone of these words and points out that this tone avoids the danger of oxymoron (*ad Aen.* vii. 295):<sup>9</sup>

CAPTI POTUERE CAPI] cum felle dictum est: nam si hoc remoueas, erit oxymoron. Dicit autem omnia quae contigerunt, non videri contigisse, quia non obfuerunt.

This is the sole occurrence of the word *oxymoron* in the whole commentary<sup>10</sup> and, it seems, the figure was not appreciated by the exegete.<sup>11</sup> Servius is presumably trying to explain the wordplay between *capti* and *capi*, but the highly refined rhetorical technique of these lines probably goes beyond the grammarian's understanding and appreciation; maybe such a subtle image was not considered worthy of Vergil's poetry and the great conception of the *Aeneid*. Thus Juno's indignation appeared as a convenient explanation of the contradiction brought about by the events. At any rate, Servius seems to ignore Vergil's

<sup>9</sup> According to Hardie 2009, p. 108, *Aen.* vii. 294–296 point to 'the central paradoxes of the *Aeneid*, that the conquered are not conquered, that construction comes of destruction'.

<sup>10</sup> Mountford – Schultz 1962, *s.v.* *oxymoron*.

<sup>11</sup> A discussion on word puns disagreeable to the ancient readers can be found in Jocelyn 1979 and Hardie 2009.



borrowing from Ennius, although the *Annals* are frequently cited in his commentary.<sup>12</sup>

## 2. A Philological Issue

Servius and Macrobius debate on a lexical variant at *Aen.* v. 238. The words under discussion are the verbs *porricio* and *porrigo*, both possibly used by Cloanthus when requesting the sea gods' help to win the boat race (*Aen.* v. 235–238):

Di, quibus imperium est pelagi, quorum aequora curro,  
vobis laetus ego hoc candentem in litore taurum  
constituam ante aras voti reus extaque salsos  
proiciam in fluctus et vina liquentia fundam.<sup>13</sup>

Servius prefers the reading *proiciam* because this verb seems the most appropriate word to use when the entrails are cast forth into the waves (*ad Aen.* v. 238):

PROICIAM] exta 'proiciuntur' in fluctus, aris 'porriciuntur',  
hoc est porriguntur: nisi forte dicamus etiam fluctibus offerri.  
Quod si est, 'orriciam' legendum est, id est porro iaciam.

In *Sat.* III Praetextatus is polemical regarding this explanation and favors the variant *porriciam*, basing his reasoning and explanation on ritual doctrine and the authoritative works of historians and lexicographers (*Sat.* III. 2. 2–5):

Et primum illud non omiserim, in quo plerique falluntur:  
Extaque salsos porriciam in fluctus, non, ut  
quidam, proiciam, aestimantes dixisse Virgilium procienda  
exta, quia adiecit in fluctus. Sed non ita est. Nam et ex dis-  
ciplina haruspicum et ex praecepto pontificum verbum hoc  
sollemne sacrificantibus est, sicut Veranius ex primo libro  
Pictoris ita dissertationem huius verbi executus est: Exta  
porriciunto, dis danto, in altaria aramve focu-  
mve eove quo exta dari debebunt. Porricere ergo,

<sup>12</sup> Mountford – Schultz 1962<sup>2</sup>, *s.v.* *Ennius citatur*.

<sup>13</sup> Conte 2005 reads *proiciam*, while Geymonat 1973 and 2008 prefer *porriciam* and Mynors *proiciam*. The reading *proiciam* is found in the most important manuscripts of the *Aeneid* except for the Parisinus lat. 7906 (8<sup>th</sup> century).

non proicere, proprium sacrificii verbum est, et quia dixit Veranius, in aram focumve eove quo exta dari debebunt, nunc pro ara et foco mare accipiendum est cum sacrificium dis maris dicatur. [...] Ex his docetur in mare rite potuisse porrici exta, non proici.

Praetextatus has achieved his goal i.e. to demonstrate that Vergil has perfect knowledge of the language of religion and always uses the proper word.<sup>14</sup> Compared with this long speech, Servius is clearly concise: he briefly explains his textual choice on lexical grounds and echoes the philological discussion about *proicio/porricio*, proposing, though doubtfully, a possible alternative. As a narrative character of the *Saturnalia*, Praetextatus is expected to be more talkative and defend the variant reading with evidence and examples. The analysis of a secondary variant and the polemical undertone were, perhaps, deliberately sought by Macrobius: would a plain discourse on a reading everyone favored have been so interesting? And would the orator have appeared so cultivated and erudite?

### 3. *A Mythological Issue*

In the *Georgics* Vergil admirably concludes the section dedicated to sheep with an enigmatic story: Pan is said to have seduced the goddess Luna by means of a snow-white gift, possibly a fleece (*georg.* III. 391–393):

Munere sic niveo lanae, si credere dignum est,  
Pan deus Arcadiae captam te, Luna, fefellit  
in nemora alta vocans; nec tu aspernata vocantem.

This story, as told by Vergil in a three-line picture, is ambiguous. Modern commentators on the *Georgics* generally believe that Pan turned himself into a gleaming white ram and enticed Luna into the woods;<sup>15</sup> however, such an explanation assigns

<sup>14</sup> *Sat.* II. 1. 2 *Verborum autem proprietas tam poetae huic familiaris est ut talis observatio in Vergilio laus esse desinat. Nullis tamen magis proprie usus est quam sacris vel sacrificialibus verbis.*

<sup>15</sup> Mynors 1990, p. 238 and Thomas 1988, p. 115.

the god with the power of metamorphosis that he does not seem to possess. Also the ancient authors wanted to clarify the narration for their audience; in addition, they tried to seek the origin. In the annotation on l. 391 Servius asserts that Vergil changed the traditional tale (*fabula*), presumably – as Alan Cameron suggests<sup>16</sup> – to defend himself from the accusation of ignoring Greek mythology (*ad georg.* III. 391):

Mutat fabulam: nam non Pan, sed Endymion amasse dicitur Lunam. Qui spretus pavit pecora candidissima et sic eam in suos inlexit amplexus: cuius rei mystici volunt quandam secretam esse rationem.

According to tradition, it was Endymion who was loved by Selene (Luna)<sup>17</sup> and their love affair involved neither sheep nor wool gifts. The allusion to *mystici* and some esoteric rites may refer to a magic cult connecting Pan and Luna in Arcadia, precisely where Vergil set his story.<sup>18</sup> The poet may have changed the story or have drawn inspiration from another source, as stated by Servius Danielis and Macrobius.

The version given by Servius Danielis in the annotation on *georg.* III. 391 consists merely of a paraphrase of Vergil's verses with some more detail, and is ascribed to the Greek poet Nicander:

Fabula sic est: Pan cum Lunae amore flagraret, ut illi formosus videtur, niveis velleribus se circumdedit atque ita eam ad rem veneriam illexit. Huius opinionis auctor est Nicander: nec poterat esse nisi Graecus.

Mention of Nicander as the source of Vergil's tale is also made by Macrobius. In *Sat.* v Eustathius speaks about Vergil's borrowings from Greek poetry and, with a polemical tone, accuses Valerius Probus of ignoring such information (*Sat.* v. 22. 9–10):

<sup>16</sup> Cameron 2004, p. 200.

<sup>17</sup> Bethe 1905; Gabelmann 1986.

<sup>18</sup> 'Le rapprochement culturel de ces deux divinités, dans une région qui prétend les avoir vu naître l'un et l'autre, n'a rien d'in vraisemblable' (Borgeaud 1979, p. 80, n. 52). This myth is also told on a magic Greek papyrus found in Egypt, and other magic texts show Luna made pregnant by Pan (Borgeaud 1979, p. 174).

In hoc loco Valerius Probus, vir perfectissimus, notat nescire se hanc historiam sive fabulam quo referat auctore. Quod tantum virum fugisse miror. Nam Nicander huius est auctor historiae, poeta quem Didymus, grammaticorum omnium quique sint quique fuerint instructissimus, fabulosum vocat.

At the beginning of his speech, Eustathius asserts that he is not going to recall what is well-known (*Sat.* v. 2. 4) and that he will pass over what is taught to schoolboys (*Sat.* v. 2. 6): at an intellectuals' banquet these notions are probably considered familiar and obvious. He is supposed to divulge something new, never heard before; hence the polemical attitude to other commentators.

Comparison of these three comments shows some differences between a line-by-line commentary and a sympotic dialogue. Servius and Servius Danielis aim to explain the ambiguous story of Pan and Luna; moreover, the former gives a mystic interpretation while the latter proposes a possible source of the tale. Macrobius focuses only on the source and the literary polemics about Vergil's borrowings. As mentioned above, the speaking character – in this case Eustathius – is expected to talk about one topic without roaming into other issues. It is worth noting that Servius Danielis and Macrobius mention the same Greek source, whereas Servius refers to esoteric cults and not to literary models: a common cultural background or similar readings and studies might be inferred from the first two commentators' observations.

#### 4. Conclusion

These three examples are only representative of different approaches to Vergil's poetry, yet they demonstrate how many methods and ways of commenting are possible, according to one's interests and purposes. Servius is mainly oriented to survey and explain the text, concentrating particularly on those aspects he considers worthy of remarks and clarification; following the 'stream' of the reading, as it were, he discusses and brings into focus several facets. The *Saturnalia* are organized differently: each character is given a single theme to deal with and is compelled to say everything he knows about it; Vergil's works are, so

to speak, cut into pieces to fit into every speech made at the banquet. What remains common is the authors' veneration of the great poet.

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### *Abstract*

Servius' exegetical work and a large part of Macrobius' *Saturnalia* deal with the same subject, Vergil and his poems. However, the different structures of the two works entail different treatments and approaches to the subject. This paper examines the comments on two passages from the *Aeneid* and one from the *Georgics*, in order to show the similarities and dissimilarities between Servius' and Macrobius' arts of commenting.

[*ABUNDE*] *SUFFECERAT*... *SED*:  
UN'IDEA RICORRENTE NELLE  
*INTERPRETATIONES VERGILIANAE*  
DI TIBERIO CLAUDIO DONATO

1. [*Abunde*] *suffecerat*... *sed*

Nelle *Interpretationes Vergilianae* Tiberio Claudio Donato<sup>1</sup> opera, come è noto, un pressoché costante elogio della *brevitas* di Virgilio, esaltata sia nelle parole del narratore sia in quelle dei personaggi, e intesa come capacità di condensazione di un vasto *intellectus* in un discorso breve.<sup>2</sup> Tuttavia, in alcuni casi Donato ammette infrazioni: si può insomma non essere brevi, qualora le circostanze lo richiedano. Emerge, dal suo commento all'*Eneide*, una visione retorica della *brevitas*,<sup>3</sup> il cui utilizzo è adeguato alle circostanze pratiche nelle quali si realizzano gli enunciati: la *brevitas*, prima che come parametro positivo in sé e al quale uniformarsi tassativamente, è considerata positiva se e in quanto funzionale al raggiungimento di uno scopo pratico. Di seguito mi occuperò del nesso [*abunde*] *suffecerat*... *sed*, che – talvolta variato nella forma, ma con funzione e significato analoghi – ricorre nelle *Interpretationes Vergilianae* in corrispondenza di un atteggiamento apparentemente contraddittorio, nel quale l'esegeta riconosce al testo una sovrabbondanza che tuttavia, come l'esemplificazione chiarirà, non viene considerata in contrasto

<sup>1</sup> Per le citazioni di Tiberio Claudio Donato si fa riferimento all'edizione Georgii 1905-1906.

<sup>2</sup> A tale proposito si vedano perlomeno Squillante Saccone 1985; Gioseffi 2005; Pirovano 2006 e 2010.

<sup>3</sup> In linea con gli studi su Donato degli ultimi decenni: cf. Squillante Saccone 1985; Starr 1991, 1992; Moretti 1998; Gioseffi 1999, 2000, 2005; Pirovano 2006, 2010; Daghini 2013. Sulla *brevitas* cf. Raschieri c.s.

con la *brevitas*. Il nesso mi è parso utile per illustrare la concezione retorica della *brevitas* e come spunto per una riflessione sulla personalità esegetica di Donato.

Secondo Donato i personaggi talora abbandonano la *brevitas* che dovrebbe essere loro connaturata e aggiungono al proprio discorso parti avvertite come sovrabbondanti. Così, per lo più allo scopo di rassicurare l'interlocutore, essi dapprima ricorrono alla *brevitas*, ma successivamente l'abbandonano per ottenere o consolidare un determinato effetto; ciò avviene solitamente in corrispondenza di uno snodo di particolare importanza. Il meccanismo, a dispetto delle apparenze, non è contraddittorio né rispetto alla *brevitas* né al proprio interno, come l'adozione e il successivo abbandono di un'espressione breve potrebbero invece suggerire, proprio perché rivolto a un fine pratico – giustificato dunque in una prospettiva retorica.

Il commento *ad Aen.* I. 257-273 ne è esempio paradigmatico (p. 59, 17 ss.): Giove tranquillizza Venere circa le sorti dei Troiani dopo il naufragio che li ha spinti sulle coste libiche; il discorso si articola in due sezioni, a loro volta internamente ripartite:

1. vv. 257-258: secondo Donato Giove rassicura la figlia rapidamente (*cito*), e le sue prime parole, *parce metu, Cytherea*, sarebbero sufficienti a tranquillizzarla: *quodsi hoc solum dixisset, abunde suffecerat; nam et securam reddidit et nihil mutatum de superioribus promissis expressit*. Tuttavia il dio aggiunge una frase, *manent inmota tuorum fata tibi*: l'aggiunta si giustifica in termini di completezza ed efficacia e, inoltre, di rispetto delle gerarchie (Giove adotta un tono paterno e nello stesso tempo profetico, adatto al re degli dèi). A questo punto Donato inserisce una sotto-nota: riprendendo la forma *manent inmota tuorum fata tibi*, egli rileva al suo interno un ulteriore elemento sovrabbondante, il termine *inmota*, che ha però lo scopo di completare (*satiare*) l'affermazione. Il passo mostra perciò l'applicazione dello schema entro lo schema; questi versi costituiscono un'anticipazione *clausa generalitate* di quanto verrà spiegato *specialiter* e più diffusamente nella seconda sezione.
2. vv. 258-260: per rassicurare ulteriormente Venere, Giove le predice le vicende dei Troiani e dei loro discendenti fino ad Augusto, enumerandole *specialiter*; si dimostra così la capacità retorica del dio, che, attraverso un'accorta *dispositio*, è in grado di seguire lo svolgimento degli eventi con efficacia e di rassicurare completa-



mente l'interlocutore: *ut autem apertiore faceret specialitatem ipsam, addidit etiam ipse Iuppiter fatorum dispositionem*.<sup>4</sup>

L'abbandono della *brevitas* è legato al precedente utilizzo e ai suoi effetti, e si configura *pro persona audientis*: *ut cito securam Venerem faceret, usus est brevitate, ubi securam succincta dictione perfecit, promisit futurorum longam fore insinuationem, quae pro auditurae persona odiosa esse non potuit*.

Il discorso nel suo complesso mostra l'abilità di Virgilio, che sa servirsi della *brevitas* quando necessario, ma sa sfruttare una *longa insinuatō* per consolidare un determinato effetto. La *brevitas* e il suo contrario si dimostrano strumenti retorici, necessari al conseguimento di un fine pratico e il cui utilizzo varia a seconda della situazione.<sup>5</sup>

Un caso simile si trova nel libro quinto, quando Nettuno rassicura Venere circa l'arrivo dei Troiani nel Lazio: *ad Aen.* v. 812-813 (p. 521, 29 ss.). Anche qui il breve e generico appello alla cessazione dei timori (*pelle timores*) sarebbe sufficiente a tranquillizzare Venere: *ad removendam sollicitudinem Veneris quam brevibus usus est verbis*. Tuttavia, per rassicurarla completamente e garantirle la propria buona disposizione, Nettuno aggiunge (cf. *addidit*) un'altra informazione, avvertita come sovrabbondante ma giustificata dal fine pratico, ossia l'indicazione esatta del luogo al quale Enea perverrà (v. 813). Tale fine fa sì che non venga rilevata alcuna infrazione alla *brevitas*, che si conferma valore positivo in relazione all'assolvimento di una funzione specifica.

Anche per l'apparizione del Tevere a Enea nel libro ottavo Donato ricorre allo schema – discostandosi maggiormente dalla formula individuata, ma senza variazioni sostanziali: *ad Aen.* viii. 37-40 (p. 119, 6 ss.). Secondo Donato, infatti, l'espressione elogiativa *o sate gente deum* al v. 37 basterebbe a dissolvere

<sup>4</sup> L'attenzione dell'esegeta si sposta così su Virgilio e sul progetto del poema: Donato avvisa il lettore che, benché il sommario includa la storia dei Troiani e dei loro discendenti fino ad Augusto, il poema non giungerà a trattarla tutta a causa della morte dell'autore (*ad Aen.* i. 259-260, p. 60, 11 ss.).

<sup>5</sup> Ferma restando una preferenza per la *brevitas*: il discorso di Giove mira alla massima concisione consentita dalle circostanze (anche dilungandosi, il dio si serve della *generalitas* per non eccedere in prolissità; cf. v. 273: *gente sub Hectorea*, e il commento *ad Aen.* i. 272-273 (p. 62, 4 ss.).

l'angoscia di Enea: *quam* [scil. *laudem*] *si solam dixisset nec addidisset alia, sufficerent quae sub laudativo textu posuerat*. Tuttavia, per *confirmare* l'interlocutore, il dio prosegue nella lode (vv. 39-40), aggiungendo una serie di indicazioni non immediatamente connesse alla figura di Enea – il suo essere *expectatus solo Laurenti*, l'aver raggiunto una *certa domus* e dei *certi penates*, il non doversi lasciare spaventare dalle minacce di guerra – ma coerenti al contesto narrativo e giustificate dal fine: *addit alia, ut animum aestuantis maiore securitatis sponsione confirmet*.

Il meccanismo si ripete quando il Tevere suggerisce l'opportunità di un'alleanza con Evandro: *ad Aen.* VIII. 49-50 (p. 120, 26 ss.). Benché le predizioni precedenti fossero sufficienti a informare Enea, secondo Donato il dio aggiunge altri fatti (v. 51) per mettere il proprio discorso al riparo dall'*obscuritas* e tranquillizzare ulteriormente l'eroe troiano: *tamen nihil volens in occulto remanere addidit etiam haec quae illum facerent laetiores*. L'esegeta mostra inoltre di apprezzare che il Tevere anticipi che il suo discorso sarà breve (*paucis* [...] *docebo*, v. 50) per porre fine rapidamente ai patimenti dell'eroe:<sup>6</sup> *bene promisit brevitatem, ne iam diu sollicitum sermonis prolixitate suspenderet* – dopo di che il discorso contraddice la promessa, ma questo rientra, come si è visto, nelle necessità del momento. La *brevitas* è così investita di un compito pratico, retorico e 'psicologico' allo stesso tempo.

Da questi primi esempi è possibile individuare alcune modalità e costanti d'applicazione: innanzi tutto, solitamente si ha un personaggio in condizione di superiorità che deve assicurare un sottoposto (e.g.: divinità maggiore/divinità minore; divinità nel proprio ambito di azione/divinità fuori dal proprio ambito; divinità/mortale); la formula, inoltre, denota insistenza e ripetizione di determinati concetti (in sé superflui o percepiti come tali), come forma di assicurazione ulteriore.

<sup>6</sup> Si ricordi che il discorso avviene in sogno – il che è problematico per l'interpretazione fornita; cf. anche *ad Aen.* VIII. 51-56 (p. 121, 1 ss.): il Tevere ha aggiunto informazioni per prevenire eventuali obiezioni (ma non è chiaro da parte di chi, visto che Enea è solo e sta dormendo); Donato ha ignorato, più o meno intenzionalmente, il particolare. Per rendere ragione dell'atteggiamento, vanno ricordati l'intento apologetico nei confronti di Virgilio e l'influenza delle pratiche scolastiche e declamatorie, che conduce a riscritture personali degli episodi: cf. Gioseffi 2000; Pirovano 2006 e 2007-2008.

Chiariti i tratti fondamentali del meccanismo,<sup>7</sup> vorrei soffermarmi su alcuni casi particolari.

Nel terzo libro Donato applica il procedimento a un responso oracolare: *ad Aen.* III. 94-96 (p. 277, 15 ss.). Nel commentare l'oracolo di Delo, Donato rileva che il responso è, come da tradizione, breve ed esaustivo: *quid brevius? Quid evidentius hoc responso?* Egli osserva però che i vv. 97 ss., che anticipano una parte non richiesta di profezia, sono apparentemente superflui, ma giustificati dal fine di rassicurare: *ut autem propriam domum fore et genus atque urbem in aeternum mansura manifesta ratione monstraret, addidit...* Siamo dunque perfettamente nella casistica. Ciò che rende particolare il caso è la contraddizione con quello che viene normalmente riconosciuto lo stile oracolare,<sup>8</sup> il fatto, cioè, che l'idea di Donato sia più forte di questa tradizione, tanto che egli non riconosce nell'oracolo nessuna anfibia (nonostante il responso si presti ad essere mal interpretato, e i Troiani difatti vadano in un primo momento a Creta, anziché nel Lazio).

Il commento ai vv. 115-120 dell'ottavo libro mi è sembrato particolare per una ragione diversamente formale: esso vede cioè l'applicazione dello schema noto, dove però il primo enunciato (quello che *suffecerat*, ma al quale è operata un'aggiunta per consolidare un effetto) è costituito non da un'espressione verbale, ma da un gesto: *ad Aen.* VIII. 115-116 (p. 131, 31 ss.). Per rassicurare Pallante, che ha scorto i Troiani in lontananza e li ha interrogati circa le loro intenzioni, a Enea sarebbe stato sufficiente il gesto simbolico di tendere un ramo d'ulivo in segno di pace: *suffecerat ad indicandam securitatem ramum ostendisse pacificae frondis*. Tuttavia, per tranquillizzarlo ulteriormente (e poiché Pallante *multa [...]* *quaesiverat*), Enea opera la consueta aggiunta, fornendo anche una risposta verbale (v. 117 ss.): *idcirco praemisso signo pacis exorsus est atque ita omnibus breviter respondit, ut securum celerius faceret: [VIII. 117] TROIUGENAS AC TELA VIDES...*<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Per altre occorrenze, si vedano i seguenti passi: *ad Aen.* IV. 268-270, p. 389, 11 ss.; *ad Aen.* IX. 128-129, p. 204, 7 ss.; *ad Aen.* XII. 10, p. 547, 18 ss.

<sup>8</sup> Su anfibia e stile oracolare cf. Lausberg 1960, §§ 1067-1070; Mortara Garavelli 1988, pp. 133-137.

<sup>9</sup> A Donato sembra sfuggire, in questa scena, la riproposizione variata, da parte di Virgilio, delle formule omeriche caratterizzanti gli incontri, per la quale cf. Heinze 1915, pp. 420-432. Sui discorsi nell'*Eneide*, cf. Highet 1972.

1.1. [*Abunde*] *suffecerat... sed* nelle parole del narratore

Può essere interessante, a questo punto, evidenziare che Donato non si limita ad applicare la formula alle parole dei personaggi, ma più di una volta si avvale di essa anche per le parole del narratore.<sup>10</sup>

Si veda, nel secondo libro, la descrizione dell'uccisione di Priamo da parte di Pirro,<sup>11</sup> dove il soggetto dell'avere fornito a sufficienza informazioni è, appunto, il narratore, che, per ottenere un certo effetto (in termini di caratterizzazione di personaggi e, come vedremo, di *pathos*), aggiunge alla scena dettagli che l'esegeta avverte come sovrabbondanti: *ad Aen.* II. 552-553 (p. 224, 23).

Al narratore sarebbe stato infatti sufficiente segnalare la decapitazione di Priamo (che Donato vede riassunta nel gesto del v. 552: Pirro lo afferra per i capelli)<sup>12</sup> per segnalare Pirro come adirato. Donato ritiene però che il narratore aggiunga un altro elemento finalizzato a meglio caratterizzare il personaggio (*lateri* [...] *abdidit ense*, v. 553), secondo lo schema noto: *quasi abscisio capitis non suffecisset ad perficiendam hominis necem, quoniam vehementer irati personam induxerat, et 'lateri', inquit, 'abdidit ense usque ad capulum'*. La strategia si applica in un contesto particolare: al testo virgiliano manca un'informazione, ossia la decapitazione (che Virgilio lascia all'intelligenza del lettore, il quale può dedurla dalla descrizione del corpo senza vita di Priamo ai vv. 557-558); Donato invece forza il testo, anticipandola ed esplicitandola: la scena acquista così ulteriore forza emotiva. A questo punto, Donato nota che alla decapitazione, in sé sufficiente, il narratore aggiunge un altro gesto per meglio connotare emotivamente la scena e caratterizzare il personaggio *furens*. L'aggiunta, finalizzata al contesto emotivo e alla raffigurazione del personaggio, non si realizza attraverso discorsi, ma tramite gesti e strutturazione di scene.

<sup>10</sup> Trattandosi di un poema epico, mi permetto qui e in seguito di riferirmi più o meno indistintamente a Virgilio, al poeta e al narratore (salvo casi specifici: cf. libri II e III).

<sup>11</sup> Sull'episodio cf. Gioseffi 2004; si consideri l'ambiguità dovuta al fatto che nel secondo libro Enea è narratore di secondo grado.

<sup>12</sup> Sull'ambiguità del testo virgiliano in corrispondenza di una tradizione mitologica non univoca, cf. D'Anna 1975.

Non si tratta di un caso isolato;<sup>13</sup> i passi interessati da questa dinamica sono accomunati, inoltre, dal ricorrere del verbo *satiare* – che, nel significato di ‘completare, esprimere in maniera esaustiva’, assurge a termine critico per le scelte del narratore.<sup>14</sup>

## 2. Abunde suffecerat... nam

Si può meglio comprendere lo schema esaminato finora, osservando un altro meccanismo simile, ma di segno opposto. In alcuni casi, infatti, Donato non segnala che un personaggio o il narratore hanno detto più del necessario per ottenere un certo effetto, ma che il personaggio o il narratore hanno parlato solamente di un fatto, tecedone altri, perché quanto detto era già sufficiente; dunque, non avrebbe avuto senso operare alcuna aggiunta. Si potrebbe dire, con espressione non attestata in Donato ma costruita sulla falsariga della formula nota, *abunde suffecerat... nam*. La formula mostra come Donato, adottato un medesimo parametro di valutazione (la quantità delle parole in relazione al contesto), individua una realizzazione dall’esito opposto al precedente, nella quale cioè alla prima affermazione (‘quanto detto sarebbe stato sufficiente’) segue – almeno implicitamente – la constatazione di un atteggiamento pienamente coerente con la *brevitas*.

Si prenda ad esempio il commento a un passo del secondo libro:<sup>15</sup> *ad Aen.* II. 596–597 (p. 229, 7 ss.). Venere fa appello all’affetto di Enea verso Anchise per distoglierlo dal progetto di vendetta nei confronti di Elena dopo l’uccisione di Priamo. Secondo Donato non ci sono aggiunte superflue: per ottenere l’effetto desiderato, è sufficiente ricordare la vecchiaia del padre senza bisogno di far riferimento ai malanni che vi si associano né al fatto che alla debolezza generica si accompagnano infermità speciali:<sup>16</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Cf. *ad Aen.* VII. 324–329, p. 51, 18 ss.; *ad Aen.* XII. 548–551 p. 616, 6 ss.; *ad Aen.* XII. 574–575, p. 618, 20 ss.

<sup>14</sup> Per questo uso cf. ad esempio *ad Aen.* I. 29–31, p. 16, 11; *ad Aen.* I. 539–541, p. 109, 3; *ad Aen.* II. 65–66, p. 156, 2; *ad Aen.* XII. 19–21, p. 550, 1.

<sup>15</sup> Un caso simile si trova anche *ad Aen.* III. 45, p. 268, 19 ss.

<sup>16</sup> L’idea di un’infermità di Anchise è diffusa nell’antichità (cf., ad esempio, Canciani 1981): Donato sembra dare spazio a un elemento che nell’*Eneide* è solo accennato (Verg. *Aen.* II. 645–649), integrando nell’interpretazione la tradizione iconografica. Cf. inoltre D’Anna 1975.

*ecce dixit senem, de corporis autem vitio tacuit. Cur enim diceret ei qui patris nosset, et cum sufficeret aetatis ex qua semper est debilis senectus, etiamsi nullo vitio extrinsecus praegravetur?* Si tratta, come si vede, dello stesso modo di ragionare sotteso al meccanismo noto, ma qui cambiato di segno, in quanto privato della contraddizione (almeno apparente) dell'aggiunta. Non vi è opposizione tra i due casi, se non nel fatto che a priori ci sono contesti retorici differenti, che quindi richiedono comportamenti differenti per quanto concerne la *brevitas*. I due schemi vanno considerati, pertanto, come diversi strumenti dei quali Donato si serve per rendere ragione, di volta in volta, del testo virgiliano, ed è proprio la prospettiva retorica a garantire coerenza all'operazione. Il fatto è infine spia di un'attitudine più generale dell'esegeta, identificabile nella tendenza a 'quantificare' le parole virgiliane proprio nell'atto di commentarle.

### 3. Un'esegesi 'quantificatrice'

Nei casi fin qui esaminati, Donato tende a verificare, in ogni enunciato, che cosa sia sufficiente al conseguimento di uno scopo, alla chiarezza espositiva, alla caratterizzazione di un personaggio, che cosa invece non lo è, valutando caso per caso le eventuali aggiunte, da lui ricondotte a un fine retorico. Il meccanismo [*abunde*] *suffecerat... sed* sembra costituire pertanto una (e non la sola) manifestazione concreta di un modo di pensare più profondo e radicato,<sup>17</sup> al punto da condurre, talvolta, a deviazioni rispetto al testo virgiliano, come si può osservare nel prossimo (e conclusivo) esempio: *ad Aen.* I. 23-24 (p. 14, 6 ss.). Il narratore ricorda le ragioni dell'ira di Giunone. L'esegeta si sofferma sul v. 27 (*iudicium Paridis spretaeque iniuria formae*), nel quale ravvisa un'aggiunta non necessaria, considerando il giudizio e la *spreta forma* come due concetti separati: il giudizio di Paride ha offeso Giunone in quanto regina, l'ingiuria l'ha offesa in quanto donna; *addidit subinde aliam causam miro artis ingenio, ut ex uno Paridis facto non unum sed et aliud crimen videretur exortum [...]. Causae ergo irarum fuerunt, sicuti dictum est, in iudicio mali aurei duae: una quia non obtinuit, altera quia pulchrior iudicata est Venus*. Nel quantificare le

<sup>17</sup> Ad esempio cf. *ad Aen.* III. 593, p. 340, 9 ss.; *ad Aen.* IV. 675, p. 417, 20 ss.

parole di Virgilio, Donato ha scisso i due termini di un'endiadi, considerandoli non l'uno la precisazione dell'altro, bensì due idee separate, la cui presenza si sforza pertanto di giustificare ricorrendo al meccanismo ormai noto. Nel che, a suo dire, Virgilio avrebbe dato prova ancora una volta della sua *ars*, operando *miro artis ingenio*.

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### Abstract

This article focuses on Tiberius Claudius Donatus' *Interpretationes Vergilianae* and specifically on the issue of *brevitas*. The subject of the investigation is Donatus' recurring expressions aiming at justifying, from a rhetorical viewpoint, those sentences – ascribable to characters or the narrator himself – that may be regarded as infractions of the precept of *brevitas*. In particular, the paper shows that the interpretative scheme, which can be summarized with the formula [*abunde suffecerat... sed*], is used by Donatus in order to account for the presence of additional sentences that may be perceived as redundant but that actually serve a concrete purpose. This procedure offers a fruitful example of Donatus' rhetorical notion of *brevitas*, and can also be connected with a broader exegetical attitude, grounded in the quantification of words in Vergil's text.



W. MARTIN BLOOMER

## THE *DISTICHS* OF CATO IN LATE ANTIQUE SPAIN

To trace the presence and use of the *Distichs of Cato* in late antiquity may be useful as an indication of important qualities of the literary-educational culture of the Suevi and the Visigoths. If this paper does so, let it serve as an ancilla to the works of J. Fontaine and others on the greater figures of the time, Isidore especially, and the broader world of books and writers, schools and councils of late antique Spain.<sup>1</sup>

The *Distichs* came to be the most commonly used school text in the West.<sup>2</sup> This series of proverbs was written, I believe, not in the third century, as used to be said, but just after the time of Martial and Statius. Once we see it in manuscript form, that is to say in the Carolingian era, it is already a basic school text. I have located 38 extant manuscripts from roughly 775 to 1050 AD. The manuscripts range from heavily glossed copies in the Vatican which perhaps show the activity of the Carolingian commentator Remigius, to the ninth-century copy in the Ambrosiana which is a book prepared in Paris for the Irish monk Dungal on his way to teach at Bobbio. The earliest antedates the Carolingian period. Verona C 74 is a fine example of that

<sup>1</sup> Fontaine 1963.

<sup>2</sup> In preparing the entry on the *Disticha Catonis* for the *Catalogus translationum et commentariorum. Medieval and Renaissance Latin translations and commentaries. Annotated lists and guides*, ed. by Virginia Brown † et al., Washington, I have identified over 900 pre-1600 manuscripts of this text, its commentaries, and translations. For the traditions of this text, see Roos 1984; Taylor 1992; Manitius 1892; and Bloomer 2011. See especially for the correction of Boas' assertion of a uniform *liber Catonianus*, Avesani 1965.

library, written in a standard but good bookhand that reflects North Italian practice before the Carolingians.<sup>3</sup>

But what about the era between the composition of the text and the extant manuscripts? Considerable evidence suggests that the Carolingians were not innovating in their use of the *Distichs* as a fundamental instrument of education and secondly that the *Distichs* were an impetus to writing literature in late antiquity. By the second I mean not simply that these hexameters were a source for this or that line in a late poet but that the text was treated as a literary opus that needed explanation, embellishment, and augmentation. In this way too late antique practice might be the model for the medieval use of the text, which venerated the *Distichs* as an authoritative, ethical work of antiquity. Remigius would comment on it, and for the more general kind of introduction, commentary, and understanding of the text, the *accessus* tradition in all likelihood repeats material and method ultimately from the late antique schools. Perhaps Alcuin, in using the text as a model or springboard for his own ethical-prescriptive writing, was following the lead of late antique authors, particularly, as we can judge, those of Spain.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> For Remigius' commentary, see now Baldzuhn 2009, I, pp. 265–266. A new edition is promised by Lucien Reynhout, but one must still rely on the excerpts printed in Boas 1952 and Mancini 1902, pp. 175–182. See also Huygens 330–344 and de Marco 1952, pp. 466ff; Jeudy 1991a, pp. 373–397. For a list of manuscripts: Jeudy 1991b, pp. 457–500 at 488f. On Verona 163, see Spagnolo 1996, pp. 231–232; Pagnin 1935–1936, pp. 421–434; and Boas 1928, pp. 61–63. For a description of Ambrosianus C 74 sup., see Bischoff 2004, II, p. 158 (also Jordan – Wool 1996); and more broadly on its context, Bischoff 1981, p. 230. The following bibliography on this manuscript provides a wide-ranging description and analysis of the school and manuscript culture of our text in the Carolingian world: Bullough 2003, pp. 339–363; Cipriani 1968, pp. 17–18; Collura 1943, pp. 108–109; Cuzzi 1936; Eposito 1932, pp. 113–131; Ferrari 1972, pp. 35, 38–39; Glauche 1970, pp. 6, 31–32; Munk Olsen 2007, pp. 49–106; Vezin 1982, pp. 128–142.

<sup>4</sup> One example of Alcuin using a Spanish author for his ethical writings is his treatise 'On the Virtues and Vices' which used Isidore's *Sententiae* – this connection has been demonstrated conclusively by Wallach 1955. Alcuin's direct use of the *Distichs* was described by the editor of what is still the standard edition of the text, Marcus Boas, both in a short monograph and in the introduction to his posthumous edition: Boas 1937 and 1952. On the *accessus* tradition, see Huygens 1970 and Minnis – Scott 1988.

From where did the Carolingians receive this text? It is certainly possible that the text was distributed throughout the late empire. There is, however, strong evidence for its use as an educational text in three places: Britain, Spain, and North Africa.<sup>5</sup> It is perhaps ironic that we see the text best where of course Latin culture and Latin manuscripts would suffer a great break. The following is not meant to prove that Alcuin and his coevals received the text from Spain but to describe the qualities of the understanding and use of the *Distichs* in Spain since the broadest evidence is to be found in writers of the Iberian peninsula.

The evidence for knowledge and use of the *Distichs* in Spain comes from four sources. The writings of Martin of Braga, Eugenius of Toledo, and Julian of Toledo testify to a knowledge of this didactic work. Finally, a manuscript of Augustine's sermons has in its margins the *pennae probationes* of a Visigothic hand before 721.

The presence of the *Distichs* is to be first seen at Braga, ancient Bracara Augusta, where since the 420s the Suevi had made their capital. The bishop of that town, ordained on April 5, 556, had been abbot of Dumium and before that had made his way to Galicia from the East probably about 550.<sup>6</sup> His work relevant here is the *Formula vitae honestae*. To demonstrate the influence of the old Roman work on this new advice to the Suebian king I have listed parallels in thought which also have parallels of expression. Martin of Braga precedes, in Roman type; the *Distichs* follow, in Italic.

2. 36. Cum consideratione promitte, plenius quam promiseris presta.

I. 13. *Spem tibi promissi certam promittere noli;  
Rara fides ideo est, quia multi multa loquuntur.*

<sup>5</sup> Aelfric, Bede, and Commodian had the text at hand or in memory. Commodian integrates a number of the *Distichs* verbatim into his text: see Opelt 1988. The later presence of the *Distichs* in England derives from the continent: Lapidge 1982; Treharne 2003. I find the parallels adduced in Gannaway 2013 for evidence of Ambrose's use of the *Distichs* unconvincing.

<sup>6</sup> See Barlow 1950, pp. 1–3. On the *Formula vitae honestae*, see above all Torre 2009.

The polyptoton of ‘promise’ is suggestive of influence, but here as elsewhere one would like some other verbal influence – some additional trace of the distich upon Martin’s diction.

2. 41. Non semper in actu sis, sed interdum animo tuo  
requiem dato.

iv. 6. *Interpone tuis interdum gaudia curis,*  
*Ut possis animo quemvis sufferre laborem.*

The thought is close, though pleasure and rest are not quite the same sort of relaxation. The appearance of *interdum* (something of a favorite in the *Distichs*, which occurs seven times in the two hundred sixty seven lines of the body of the text) is the closest verbal parallel. Again, however, Seneca seems the common source. The use of *interdum* is far from conclusive, since ‘sometimes’ is a useful sort of word when making philosophical commonplaces. Seneca has many instances, e.g., *epist.* 14. 7 *Interdum populus est, quem timere debeamus.* Further, Martin’s phrasing and thought is closer to Seneca, *epist.* 85. 37 *ipse semper in actu est, in effectum tunc maximus, cum illi fortuna se opposuit.* The phrase *quod semper in actu est* is a fairly standard late antique philosophical calque for Aristotle’s *enargeia* or *entelecheia*. The passage of the letter of Seneca is indeed counseling Lucilius that the philosopher is ever in action like a pilot steering the vessel in storm and in calm. Martin’s larger point here, the proper sort of study to fill our free time, may well have been inspired by a lost passage in Seneca’s works.

I offer another example of an overlap of distinction which demonstrates not Martin’s dependence on the *Distichs* but their joint use of Seneca. Again, we see a favorite term of Seneca but no direct parallel from his extant works. The timid man is one of Seneca’s frequent targets, e.g., *tranq.* 16. 2 *Quid enim est turpius quam si maximi viri timidos fortiter moriendo faciunt?* Here the man fearful of death is opposed to the great heroes like Cato who embraced death. More generally, the fearful man like the angry man is the antitype of the philosopher. In particular, the timid has not rehearsed in his mind all those *pericula* that life will bring. Martin is in fact describing the philosophical man at 3. 10:

3. 10–11. *Eris magnanimus, si pericula nec appetas ut temerarius, nec formides ut timidus. Nam timidum non facit animum nisi reprehensibilis vitae conscientia mala.*

The *Distichs* use the timid man on several occasions:

- IV. 43. *Suspectus caveas ne sis miser omnibus horis,  
Nam timidis et suspectis aptissima mors est.*

Martin concludes his account of magnanimity with

7. 8. Mensura ergo magnanimitatis est nec timidum esse hominem nec audacem.

The *Distichs* also has audacity as an unwanted extreme of behavior:

- III. 8a. *Rumori ne crede novo nec ficta loquendo*  
*Laeteris: nocuit cunctis audacia semper.*

But with such terms we are no longer tracing verbal influence or the ongoing reading of philosophical texts but simply perhaps the endurance of types and antitypes in moral discourse – a broad topic indeed.

A more concrete example of possible influence comes at *Formula vitae honestae* 4, 3:

- Si continens fueris, usque eo pervenies ut te ipso contentus sis.
- (2) IV. 2. *Si contentus eo fueris, quod postulat usus,*  
(1) *Communda naturae nullo tibi tempore deerunt.*
- III. 11. *Rebus et in censu si non est quod fuit ante,*  
*Fac vivas contentus eo, quod tempora praebent.*

Martin has a fondness for polypotton in his sententiae. This may well be his distinctive modification of the line from the *Distichs*. The source of the *Distichs'* expressions of *vivere contentus* (and note the close conjunction of *eo* with its accompanying syntax [*quod ...*]) is Horace, *Sat.* 1. 4. 107 ff:

- cum me hortaretur parce, frugaliter atque  
viverem uti contentus eo quod mi ipse parasset,  
'nonne vides Albi ut male vivat filius utque  
Baius inops?'.

Martin's *Si continens...* is the strongest case for the use of the *Distichs*, for two reasons: first, the propositional form is paralleled (the *Distichs'* *Si contentus* has been varied since Martin's topic is the virtue *continentia*) and second, because the author of the

*Distichs* is often adapting Horace's, and in particular the *Satires*, language and themes, there is no reason to assert that Seneca underlies the passage.

I present the following passage not as proof of influence but as an indication of how Martin and the *Distichs* treat a philosophical commonplace from Seneca. In the *De ira* (II. 10), a treatise known to both later authors, Seneca has his moderate philosopher unperturbed by the errors all about him: *Non irascetur sapiens peccantibus [...] Placidus itaque sapiens et aequus erroribus, non hostis sed corrector peccantium.*<sup>7</sup> Martin's treatment is combining a number of directives – openness to criticism, avoidance of flattery, moderation in criticizing others – which all have to do with *fama*, verbal reputation:

4. 44–46. Si merito te obiurgavit aliquis, scito quia profuit, si immerito, scito quia prodesse voluit. Non acerba, sed blanda verba timebis. Esto vitiorum fugax ipse, aliorum vero neque curiosus scrutator neque acerbus reprehensor, sed sine exprobratione corrector, ita ut admonitionem hilaritate praevenias.

Among the *Distichs* are five that describe with some similar diction (e.g., *blandus*, the anonymous *aliquis*, the crucial distinction of deserved *fama*) the proper response to praise and blame.

- I. 14. *Cum te aliquis laudat, iudex tuus esse memento;  
Plus aliis de te quam tu tibi credere noli.*
- I. 12a. *Qui prodesse potest, non est fugiendus amicus,  
Si laesit verbo: bonitas sine crimine nil est.*
- I. 23. *Si tibi pro meritis nemo respondet amicus,  
Incusare deos noli, sed te ipse coerce.*
- I. 27. *Noli homines blando nimium sermone probare;  
Fistula dulce canit, volucrem dum decipit auceps.*
- III. 4. *Sermones blandos blaesosque cavere memento;  
Simplicitas veri fama est, fraus ficta loquendi.*

Martin is no doubt recasting Seneca in his own style (and may be recasting a passage not extant). His *scrutator* is not a word

<sup>7</sup> Barlow 1950, p. 206 offers suggestions for which work of Seneca Martin has used.

Seneca used (it is a word of Silver Latin, at first more popular among the poets; see Lewis and Short). Ambrose certainly does use the word, as do many Christians on the influence of its use at Apoc. 2. 23. Certainly, Martin does not treat the *Distichs* as an authority to be cited verbatim, but this set of passages does show the degree of thematic and verbal overlap. Indeed, to anticipate my conclusions, it is at this point that we can see the common qualities of a moral discourse with roots in Seneca but adapted for pedagogic clarity and simplicity.

Martin uses a number of terms for the moral agent which seem to be colorful coinages to recast the thought of Seneca and the *Distichs*.

4. 57. In reddenda officiositate neque neglegus neque exactor appareas. Cunctis esto benignus.

This functions almost as a combination of one of the *Distichs* with one of the *breves sententiae* which were appended to the beginning of the work (between the dedicatory letter and the hexameter couplets). Among Cato's *Breves* (50) is this close correspondent: *benefici accepti esto memor*, which expresses in miniature a theme of several of the verse couplets, notably:

- I. 15. *Officium alterius multis narrare memento,  
At quaecumque aliis benefeceris ipse, sileto.*  
IV. 42. *Gratior officiis, quo sis mage carior, esto,  
Ne nomen subeas quod dicitur officiperdi.*

Martin's *neglegus exactor* is a turn of phrase quite similar to his *curiosus scrutator*. These are roles and names to be avoided, and so, just perhaps, the *Distich* that advises 'lest you suffer the name of the so called favor-pit [*officiperdus*]' has prompted Martin to invent other pejorative titles to be avoided. Something similar is happening with the three terms of reproach at *Formula* 6. 9: *Monstraberis digito astu plenus, versipellis et simplicitatis inimicus*. 'Werewolf' is a striking term of abuse, perhaps more striking for the classical Latinist than the late Latinist. Again a single *Distich* may have been the prompt:

- I. 27a. *Contra hominem astutum noli versutus haberi:  
non captare malos stultum est, sed velle nocere.*

Martin seems to have transposed *astu plenus* to *astutum* and *versutus* to *versipellis*. A final indication that Martin has the *Distichs* in mind comes from a couplet of similar point (the virtue of integrity of speech, *simplicitas*, and the threats to this posed by flattery):

- III. 4.    *Sermones blandos blaesosque cavere memento;  
Simplicitas veri fama est, fraus ficta loquendi.*

My last example has perhaps the strongest parallel of diction. The thought again comes from Seneca: the philosopher is not rigid; he can and should change his mind for cause, *De ben.* iv. 38 *Non est turpe cum re mutare consilium*. This is one of those cases where a major text, the *De ira* or the *De beneficiis*, expresses the theme but where the *Distichs* have a closer verbal parallel. It is possible that Seneca expressed the theme differently in a lost work, but it is not a good principle to allege a lost source simply because an author expresses himself differently, especially where the source text is an important one we know him to have read and where the secondary source, here the *Distichs*, has parallels in diction and thought and where further this text seems to include a spur or prompt (as Martin has expressed *versutus* with *versipellis*, a frequently used late antique term of abuse). Martin's fondness for verbal distinctions is seen again at *Formula* 4. 54: *Mobilis esto, non levis; constans, non pertinax* (the manuscripts labeled WZKF by Boas read *lenis*). The *Distichs* put the point thus:

- I. 7.    *Constans et lenis, ut res expostulat, esto:  
Temporibus mores sapiens sine crimine mutat.*

The passage from the *De ira* need not be the exact source for the theme of the philosopher changing his mind, and Martin would be contradicting the *Distichs*, if one reads with some scribes (who perhaps knew the *Distichs*) *lenis*. Martin is in fact making a series of distinctions: he says in the abstract be  $x$  and  $-x$  (flexible and steady) but  $x \neq y$  (flighty) and  $-x \neq z$  (pigheaded) (where  $y$  and  $z$  are extreme versions of  $x$  and  $-x$ ). Martin seems then to be practicing his customary penchant for making colorful verbal distinctions for what one should and should not be. Thus there is no compelling reason to seek in the variety of his text's expression a lost source or indeed a source other than the *Distichs*.



Martin and the author of the *Distichs* were each using lost works of Seneca. Martin had already epitomized the *De ira* of Seneca, and his *Formula* is clearly a brief version of the Stoic virtues with characteristically Senecan diction. The author of the *Distichs* is in several places versifying Senecan expressions from the *De beneficiis*, the *De ira*, and his letters.<sup>8</sup>

As the verbal parallels suggests, the *Distichs* may also have influenced Martin. Indeed, attention to the form of the *Formula vitae honestae* at the least demonstrates convergence with if not dependence from the *Distichs*. I would go further and say that the *Distichs* have influenced the quality of the rewriting of Seneca.

The *Distichs* have in fact a greater likeness to the work of Martin. In structure the *Formula vitae honestae* has a dedicatory letter to the king of the Suevi, an account of the four virtues, and a short conclusion. Certainly, Martin makes Seneca shorter and simpler, but this characterization does not do justice to Martin's accomplishment.<sup>9</sup> Martin has in fact made a handy, readable, and focused exhortation for the non-religious to virtue. One should not become so enthusiastic as his medieval readers would. For the *Formula* did gain a large following in the Middle Ages – it became the treatise entitled *On the Four Virtues* which was provided with a different author, Seneca himself.<sup>10</sup> There is a strange sort of justice in this, but how did the work lose its proper title and author? In part no doubt this is typical of late antique reception and transmission of minor works, namely, the practice of gathering together works in a genre and ascribing them to authoritative authors. This should not be dismissed as incompetence or error; it reflects a habit of literary activity peculiar to late antiquity. A good poem on Jonah is ascribed to Tertullian, on the Phoenix to Lactantius, a sermon to Augustine.

<sup>8</sup> Seneca, *ben.* II. 14 (*Sunt quaedam nocitura inpetrantibus, quae non dare sed negare beneficium est; aestimabimus itaque utilitatem potius quam voluntatem petentium*) has provided significant diction, indeed a pattern of phrasing but not quite the thought for *Distichs* I. 6 (*Quae nocitura tenes, quamvis sint cara, relinque: utilitas opibus praeponi tempore debet*).

<sup>9</sup> Of course, Martin has his own esthetic principles and other literary (and theological) influences. Torre 2009, pp. 209–210 points out Martin's interest in *brevitas* and his affinities with John Cassian.

<sup>10</sup> On the rich afterlife of the text – Isidore was the first to cite it, Erasmus argued against the attribution to Seneca – see Barlow 1950, pp. 204–205, 208.

It is as if there can be no minor works. So the *Formula* must be Seneca's and the *Distichs* must be Cato's. Such treatments respond to the seriousness of the literature they are transmitting and of course are a manifestation of the seriousness with which the late antique reader and writer viewed literature, and perhaps we should add, viewed the literature he first read in school. The *Distichs* are offering a brief, focused way to gain literary culture and to compose the self (*animum componere* as the dedicatory letter puts it). These two processes are necessarily related: virtue is learned in school by reading, writing, memorizing, and reciting *dicta* and *exempla*. The *Formula vitae honestae* aims at a similar moral culture through education. The dedicatory letter makes clear that this short work is a rule for the laity, for those who cannot live in orders. So the most important bishop of Spain writes for the King a distillation of the pagan virtues. Chiara Torre quite rightly argues that the *Formula* is a *speculum principis*.<sup>11</sup> A feature of that ethical genre is that every reader is treated as a potential prince. As a *speculum principis*, it is then an exemplary account of what paganism is good for, and it is a response as much to the monastic rule as to the philosophical treatise or diatribe.

The *Formula* is also a response to the *Distichs*, not simply in the small verbal ways that I have listed but in two other important facets. First, it has the same philosophical-literary purpose – a concentrated rule for life. Reading the text moralizes the self. The *Distichs* perform this again and again. The two-line aphorisms remind us to the practice of virtue and have us memorize and internalize that rule. And the dedicatory letter, probably a product of the fifth or sixth centuries, promises the young son that he will avoid the errors of the many if he attends to his father's words.<sup>12</sup> Written in the persona of the father-sage, of the old Cato, the letter ends with this fine *sententia legere et non intellegere est neglegere*. Now Martin need not have read the dedicatory letter or even the main body of the text of the

<sup>11</sup> The *Formula*'s closing words make clear that Martin was writing for the laity (Barlow 1950, p. 206). Torre 2009, pp. 221–222 suggests that the formula is for the laity what the council's *capitula* were for the clergy.

<sup>12</sup> On the dating of this letter, see Boas 1934.

*Distichs* to have the attitude that the classical text is preeminently a part of ethical philosophy. The *accessus* put the question again and again to every text we would call literary: *cui parti philosophiae subponitur*. At this point we can say that there is a remarkable convergence to use the term of the evolutionary biologists – a convergence of literary attitude and a convergence in the sense that both works are revisions of the Senecan corpus.

Is there in fact evolutionary descent? One additional formal feature suggests that Martin has been influenced by the *Distichs* and not simply by reading Seneca with a sixth-century Christian intellectual outlook. The *Formula* can be described as a work of definitions. This is true to a degree, but the chief formal structure is not the definition but the precept. Its typical mode is the imperative, which is not characteristic of Seneca. In his letters he has the occasional imperative: he directs Lucilius from time to time (*cogita*, but this means ‘consider the following this way’ or ‘imagine that...’); Seneca’s imperatives are directives to his reader for the course of reading, almost like the particles or formulas of politeness in a Platonic dialog. The *Distichs* and the *Formula*, however, carry philosophical thought in their imperatives. It is true that Martin had a taste for sententious and not simply prescriptive literature as his translation of the *Sententiae Patrum Aegyptiorum* makes clear. But that work does not rely heavily on the *sententia* in an imperative mode – the actual *dictum* of the desert father is embedded in a *chreia* and can be somewhat indirect (in need of interpretation). Where did the *Distichs* get such a mode? A monastic rule such as Benedict’s relies more on the jussive subjunctive. The closest comparandum I can think of is the *Encheiridion* of Epictetus which repeatedly like the *Distichs* uses the imperative *Remember*. The *Distichs* may well reflect the manner of late first century popularizing philosophy, and Martin seems to have taken it over. A minimal conclusion is that Martin provides evidence suggesting that the *Distichs* were being read and were influencing the new literature being produced.

More unequivocal evidence for the role of the *Distichs* in late antique Spain, shows both the distribution of the text and some evidence for the use of the text. Among the works ascribed to the seventh-century bishop Julian of Toledo, student of Eugenius bishop of Toledo, is a grammar. As Mark Amsler has argued,

this is very much a work of seventh-century Spain, rearranging Donatus' material, providing additional etymologies from Isidore among others, for the pedagogic good of his elite pupils (it has a few directly Spanish details, e.g., the names given as examples of the simple, comparative, and superlative grade for the word "learned" are Spanish and in a Carolingian manuscripts are replaced with names from the school curriculum, Cato, Donatus, and Virgil).<sup>13</sup> In this grammar the M(agister) asks a question, and the D(iscipulus) answers. Often M asks for a definition and then has a follow-up question: give me an example. D gives good definitions. The examples are mostly from Virgil, often from Christian poets, Prudentius and Paulinus of Nola, and on three occasions from the *Distichs of Cato*. M directs, give an example of a short *a*: D says *Si deus est animus nobis ut carmina dicunt*. In two other places this same line, the first of the *Distichs*, is the answer given. To parrot the first line of a poem is not a sign of much learning: declaiming *arma virumque* or Μῆνιν ἄειδε θεὰ is not very impressive, but they are signs of school learning, which attest to a certain pride in literacy and indeed pride in having gone to school.<sup>14</sup> I suggest it is not like finding a few lines of Catullus or Propertius in a medieval florilegium. There we may say that the lines were read in a late grammarian and ventriloquized by a medieval scholar trying to show off. The citation of the first line of the *Distichs* may have different resonances. The first time we find the first line of the *Distichs* written down it is not in a Carolingian manuscript nor in a manuscript of the *Distichs*.

The marginal matter in ms. Autun 107 was written before 731. The manuscript is itself a half-uncial copy of the sermons of Augustine. The colophon records the name of the scribe, the Spanish monk Honemundus, and by mentioning the bishop Anambadus provides us with a colorful *terminus ante quem*, for

<sup>13</sup> See Boas 1930; Amsler 1989, pp. 187–189; and Stancati 2010, pp. 119–123.

<sup>14</sup> The *Aeneid*'s first line, for instance, occurs with some frequency scrawled by students on the walls of Pompeii. See the discussion of Gigante 1979, pp. 163–183. Images of these inscriptions are conveniently gathered in Franklin, 1996–1997, pp. 175–184.

the bishop was burned in 731.<sup>15</sup> In several places a Visigothic hand has added the first line of the *Distichs*. It is well-formed and bold, as Rodney Robinson characterized it. Such marginalia belong at the very edge of the wide penumbra of what can be considered peritext, for after all glosses, commentary, or the addition of a dedicatory letter or epigram seem to fit the category of peritext better. Their relation to the original is clear or at least their motivation as supplements to the base text is clearer and more purposeful than the scribbling of an owner's name or a stray verse into the blank space available in a manuscript. Thus the marginal writing of Autun 107 could simply be labeled *probationes pennae*. Yet there is nothing tentative about the writing; and it is not rightly understood as *probatio*, the warm-up exercise of the scribe, for the main text is already written, in an altogether different script.<sup>16</sup> It seems with its bold ascenders and its sprawl across the full width of the top or bottom of the pages an act like the response of the student in Julian's grammar. The student facing the master's question with all his literary competence is like the reader faced with the older half-uncials of Augustine's pages. The writing in the margin is, like the student's answer, a use of the *Distichs* against the formidable presence of Latin literary culture. The opening line of *Si deus* is an inaugural moment in that culture, in two ways. The text comes very early in schooling (as traditionally, the gnomology did in ancient schooling) – it may even be the first writing exercise – and the thought of the text is itself inaugural: the two lines contain *in nuce* the rationale of education. *Si deus est animus nobis ut carmina dicunt, / hic tibi praecipue sit pura mente colendus* contains the first proposition of education, 'Since our soul is divine as the poets tell, you must especially cultivate this soul-intellect with a pure mind'. The Roman student-reader of the *Distichs* is to imagine his education as an almost religious duty whose rite he leads.

A final Spanish example of the influence of the *Distichs* (again in a school context) comes from the work of Eugenius bishop

<sup>15</sup> See both Robinson 1939 and Boas 1926.

<sup>16</sup> Bischoff 1966.

of Toledo from 646–657.<sup>17</sup> Three of his poems were attached to the *Distichs* and labeled the fifth book.<sup>18</sup> Thus as Martin of Braga lost his name to Seneca, so Eugenius was forgotten in favor of Cato. But how did he become part of Cato's peritext? The poems of Eugenius were also transmitted on their own, and so their author was not simply forgotten. The grammar of Julian of Toledo and the scribbling of the Visigothic reader of Autun 107 imply that Cato was used in the schools. The Carolingian manuscripts that append Eugenius as the fifth book of Cato in all probability reflect a late antique school practice. A schoolmaster of Toledo had his students read the short, easy poems of Eugenius after mastering the two line hexameters of Cato. The themes of the Spanish bishop are monastic and Christian: two poems inveigh against drunkenness and another reminds his readers to live a Christian life because we are all mortal. These are in fact the most Cato-like poems of Eugenius' corpus. Cato's *Distichs* typically take a propositional form, a pro-tasis followed by an imperative. If or since your soul is divine, do this. Eugenius has

Eugenius 6. 1–2. *Contra ebrietatem*

Qui cupis esse bonus, et vis dignoscere verum,  
Ut mortis socium, sic mordax effuge vinum.

Eugenius 2. 1–2. *Commonitio mortalitatis humana*

O mortalis homo, mortis reminiscere casus:  
Nil pecude distas, si tantum prospera captas

Eugenius 7. 9–10. *Contra crapulam*

Qui cupit ergo suam doctrinis crescere mentem,  
Castiget ventrem, tunc homo doctus erit.

Indeed, the rest of *Contra ebrietatem* is simply an illustration, an elaboration of the opening proposition. To judge from the ancient theorists this is a typical expansion of a sententia. The Magister sets a theme and the Discipulus must take that as his *promythium* or *epimythium* and write a poem, often a fable to illustrate the general truth. One could almost take the two hexameter distichs and the heroic couplet of poem 7 that are Eugenius' pro-

<sup>17</sup> See Alberto 1990 and 2006.

<sup>18</sup> Riou 1972.

mythia and epimythium and slip them into the body of Cato's work – such intrusive sententiae do occur, but with Eugenius the situation is not one of pseudepigraphy or of later insertion. Eugenius writes in the mode of Cato. The 'Fifth Book of the *Distichs* of Cato' represents the educational exercise after the poetic distich. It is both an exercise in versification and in expansion and illustration of the moral aphorism.

In Martin of Braga's pedagogic script penned for a king as in the more humble school forms of grammar, moralizing verse, and even anonymous marginalia, the *Distichs* of Cato show a strong grip on the school culture of Late Antique Spain. These writings are not exact peritexts, to use Genette's term – they are something more like a literary penumbra. They show in fact the penetration of the *Distichs* into a literary culture where the pedagogic exercise impels composition. The *Distichs* were of course a fundamental school exercise, a first reading and writing exercise which also told the student, repeatedly, 'Remember'. Thus they enter the memory of every student on the threshold of literacy. That they are memorable – regular in their meter and with a phrasing often formulaic and that likes strong wordplay (paronomasia and antithesis especially) – has also made them imitable. Like fable, the gnomology invites expansion and variation. The history of the reception of the *Distichs* would prove long and varied, but the early Spanish chapter anticipates and in all likelihood is a strong, direct impetus for the medieval literary future of this fundamental work.

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### *Abstract*

The presence and use of the *Distichs* of Cato in late antique Spain can be traced through citations and imitations in Martin of Braga, Eugenius of Toledo, Julian of Toledo, and a Visigothic reader of a manuscript of Augustine's sermons. The patterns of this use offer a window into the literary culture of the Spanish schools and anticipate and in all probability influenced the practices of the Carolingians.



# TRA PORFIRIONE E SERVIO: ANNOTAZIONI PSEUDACRONEE SULL'ODE I. 37 DI ORAZIO

È noto come il commento pseudacroneo non dipenda solamente da quello porfirioneo, cui pure è legato, ma risenta anche di altri modelli, innanzitutto quello serviano, e si inserisca a pieno titolo nella scuola tardoantica, con la quale condivide contenuti e metodi interpretativi.<sup>1</sup> L'analisi di alcune note pseudacronee sull'ode i. 37 di Orazio può esemplificare bene tale complessità di rapporti, a partire dall'annotazione introduttiva, *ad carm. i. 37. 1*:

NVNC EST BIBENDVM] Post bellum ciuile primum imperium Romanorum inter tres diuisum est, ita ut Antonius Orientem, Augustus Gallias, urbem Lepidus optineret. Antonius Augusti sororem habuit uxorem, qua spreta amore ductus Cleopatrae, Ptolomaei sorori, coniunctus est. Qua indignatione Augustus aduersum Antonium et Cleopatram bellum gessit apud Actiacum promunturium et praefecto classis Agrippa superauit Antonium proelio nauali; quo uicto et Alexandriam cepit. Hac ergo ode laetitiam suam significat ob uictoriam Augusti (*ATazV*).

La nota corrispondente nel commento di Porfirione recita: *Hac ode laetitiam profitetur suam poeta ob uictoriam Actiacam Augusti, cum M. Antonium apud Actium promunturium nauali proelio superauit ac deinde Alexandriam cepit*. L'annotazione porfirionea è un esempio

<sup>1</sup> Per i rapporti tra Porfirione e commenti pseudacronei, vd. Noske 1969 e Kalinina 2007. Personalmente sarei incline a ridimensionare la quantità di note pseudacronee considerabili come derivate dalle corrispondenti annotazioni porfirionee.

di nota storica corretta ma sintetica, in quanto non riporta informazioni sulle cause della guerra e non cita neppure Cleopatra. I commenti pseudacronei, invece, inseriscono una nota molto più estesa, complessivamente corretta, anche se in essa sono presenti quattro punti critici. Innanzitutto gli scolasti compiono un evidente anacronismo utilizzando per Ottaviano il titolo di Augusto, che egli non aveva al tempo di Azio; tale imprecisione si ritrova anche nell'annotazione porfirionea e altrove. I commentatori oraziani, infatti, non utilizzano mai il nome Ottaviano, ma si riferiscono al *princeps* sempre con il titolo di Augusto, indipendentemente dal periodo storico di cui si occupano. Questo è sicuramente un segno di scarsa attenzione per la cronologia, caratteristica rintracciabile anche nel commento di Servio: James Zetzel, del resto, aveva già sottolineato come lo scoliasta virgiliano colga nelle *Bucoliche* numerose allusioni alla battaglia di Azio, anche se afferma che Virgilio le compose in tre anni, cominciando all'età di ventotto (ovvero tra il 42 e il 39 a.C.).<sup>2</sup> Nel nostro caso si tratta comunque di un'imprecisione di poco conto, al contrario delle altre tre: i commentatori pseudacronei, infatti, riportano un'errata divisione dei territori tra i triumviri, poiché ad Antonio fu assegnata la maggior parte della Gallia, a Lepido la Gallia Narbonense e la Spagna, a Ottaviano l'Africa, la Sicilia e la Sardegna.<sup>3</sup> Servio, nella glossa *ad. Aen.* VIII. 678, parla del *bellum Actiacum* e del triumvirato, presentando una divisione dei territori diversa ma ugualmente erranea:

Cum de statu reipublicae esset longa contentio inter Augustum, Antonium et Lepidum, placuit ut totum Orientem teneret Antonius, Augustus Gallias et Hispanias cum Italia, Lepidus Africam Siciliam Sardiniam. Ad causam maioris fidei Antonius sororem Augusti duxit uxorem. Profecti itaque sunt in prouincias suas.

Una terza imprecisione individuabile nella nota pseudacronea è l'utilizzo dell'espressione *Cleopatrae coniunctus est*, che sembra

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Zetzel 1984.

<sup>3</sup> Per l'elenco delle fonti sul triumvirato e sulla divisione dei territori. Cf. Broughton 1952, pp. 337-338.

rimandare a un matrimonio tra Antonio e Cleopatra. L'esistenza o meno di un'unione legale tra i due è un problema ancora dibattuto; in ogni caso, al di là della verità storica, esisteva e circolava la notizia di un matrimonio.<sup>4</sup> Essa è in qualche modo adombrata nel commento pseudacronico e, come vedremo, è presente anche in Servio. Ulteriori passi paralleli si trovano in Gerolamo (*chron.* p. 162 Helm): *Augusti et Antonii tertiae dissensionis exordium, quod repudiata sorore Caesaris Cleopatram duxisset uxorem*; e nel *Breuiarium* di Eutropio (vii. 6. 1): *Antonius, qui Asiam et Orientem tenebat, repudiata sorore Caesaris Augusti Octavianiani, Cleopatram reginam Aegypti duxit uxorem*.<sup>5</sup>

Infine, gli scoliasti pseudacronici attribuiscono lo scoppio del conflitto alla decisione di Antonio di ripudiare la moglie Ottavia per iniziare una relazione (o un nuovo matrimonio) con Cleopatra, e alla conseguente *indignatio* di Ottaviano: ciò non è certamente corretto dal punto di vista storico, ma rappresenta uno spostamento di motivazioni politiche nella sfera privata. La stessa interpretazione si trova nella già citata nota serviana *ad Aen.* viii. 678:

Sed Antonius in Aegypto captus est amore Cleopatrae, non usque quaque adeo, ut ea dimissa contra Parthos proficisceretur. Quibus uictis dum Cleopatrae cupiditate festinat, exercitum omnem frigore in Armenia perdidit, ipse tamen animalium cadaueribus pastus cum paucis ad Aegyptum est reuersus. Vbi ei coepit suadere Cleopatra ut se sortiretur uxorem, derelicta sorore Augusti. Quo facto Augustus uehementer accensus contra eum coepit bella moliri. Antonius re comperta, collectis Orientis uiribus, prior cum uxore Cleopatra uenit ad bellum. Conflictum est nauali certamine circa Actium Epiri promunturium: ubi uicti sunt Antonius et Cleopatra et in fugam coacti.

<sup>4</sup> Essa si sviluppa a partire da un passo di Svetonio (*Aug.* 69. 2), in cui è riportata una lettera scritta da Antonio ad Augusto, nella quale Antonio dice di Cleopatra: *uxor mea est*.

<sup>5</sup> Le notizie sul ripudio e il nuovo matrimonio sono simili, ma solo Gerolamo li presenta come causa scatenante della guerra. Infatti a vii. 7. 43 Eutropio dice: *Hic quoque ingens bellum ciuile commouit, cogente uxore Cleopatra regina Aegypti, dum cupiditate muliebri optat etiam in urbe regnare*. Dunque la guerra scoppia a suo parere per volere di Cleopatra, per ragioni politiche e non amorose.

Questa nota è simile a quella pseudacronea dal punto di vista sia strutturale che contenutistico: entrambe, infatti, si aprono con informazioni sul triumvirato, considerano poi lo scoppio del *bellum Actiacum* attribuendovi cause amorose, delineano infine la conclusione del conflitto. Anche Servio, inoltre, allude al matrimonio, sottolineando però il tentativo di Cleopatra di convincere Antonio a sposarla, senza dire esplicitamente se tale matrimonio sia stato celebrato o meno. Nel seguito della nota, tuttavia, Cleopatra è definita *uxor* di Antonio, il che farebbe pensare a un legame legittimo, anche se con qualche dubbio.<sup>6</sup> Tra l'annotazione serviana e quella pseudacronea esiste però una differenza fondamentale: Servio, infatti, inserisce informazioni sulla campagna partica che lo Pseudo-Acrone omette. Anche la decisione di Antonio di tornare subito in Egitto, una volta vinti i Parti, è attribuita da Servio a ragioni amorose, cioè alla volontà di tornare il prima possibile dall'amata; la stessa interpretazione è nei commenti pseudacronei, nella nota *ad carm.* III. 4. 31: ET VRENTES ARENAS] *Calentes. In Assyria enim regione Persarum uehementior sol est; ubi et Antonius, dum ad Cleopatram uult reuerti, exercitum morbo perdidit (AI'afV)*. Tuttavia, la morte dei soldati è attribuita da Servio al freddo dell'Armenia, dai commentatori pseudacronei al caldo dell'Assiria; ciò prova che, malgrado le somiglianze nel metodo interpretativo, i commenti pseudacronei non copiano direttamente la nota serviana. Tornando all'interpretazione amorosa delle cause del *bellum Actiacum*, essa è presente anche in un passo delle *Periochae* (132. 119):

Cum M. Antonius ob amorem Cleopatrae, ex qua duos filios habebat, Philadelphum et Alexandrum, neque in urbem uenire uellet neque finito IIIuiratus tempore imperium deponere bellumque moliretur, quod urbi et Italiae inferret, ingentibus tam naualibus quam terrestribus copiis ob hoc contractis remissoque Octaviae, sorori Caesaris, repudio, Caesar in Epirum cum exercitu traiecit.

<sup>6</sup> Malgrado il termine *uxor* indichi generalmente la moglie legittima, è utilizzato anche con il significato di 'amante, concubina'. Vd. Forcellini, *s.v. uxor*, e D'Ors 1979.



Il paragrafo delle *Periochae* è però molto più attento di Servio e dei commentatori pseudacronei alle circostanze politiche e militari, che vengono esplicitamente presentate, anche se sono considerate come accessorie rispetto alla causa scatenante del conflitto, cioè l'amore di Antonio per Cleopatra. La stessa situazione caratterizza un passo dello pseudo-Probo (*ecl. praef.* 327. 24-28):

M. Antonius Octauiam sororem Augusti habebat uxorem et prouinciam sortitus est Aegyptum. Vbi cum Cleopatram admasset et uxorem duxisset repudio Octaviae dato et speraret de imperio Alexandriae constituendo, hostis publicus appellatus est. Quem persecuturus Augustus exercitus in orientem ducebat eumque bello superauit apud Actiacum Apollinem.

Lo scoliasta riconduce la nascita del conflitto all'amore di Antonio per Cleopatra, ma indica come concausa la volontà di Antonio di costituire un impero alessandrino, mostrando quindi un certo interesse per le circostanze politiche. Lo pseudo-Probo, inoltre, è convinto dell'esistenza di un matrimonio tra Antonio e Cleopatra, anche se tale convinzione potrebbe nascere da una semplificazione di quanto leggeva in Servio.<sup>7</sup> Dunque, al di là delle quattro imprecisioni storiche fin qui discusse, la nota pseudacronea presenta una struttura molto razionale e lineare, del tutto analoga a quella della nota serviana *ad Aen.* VIII. 678, ad eccezione della parte conclusiva. Alla fine delle notizie storiche, infatti, gli scoliasti pseudacronei tornano all'ode oraziana, riassumendone il tema fondamentale in modo analogo a quanto avviene nella nota porfirionea. Non è sicuramente questa la sede per discutere dei rapporti tra gli *scholia* oraziani, ma accennerò alla possibilità che l'ultima frase derivi al commento pseudacroneo da Porfirione. La somiglianza formale tra due note corrette dal punto di vista contenutistico non sarebbe di per sé sufficiente per definirle l'una derivata dall'altra;<sup>8</sup> tuttavia, bisogna tenere conto del fatto che l'espressione *haec ode/hanc oden/hac ode + verbum dicendi* compare nel commento pseudacroneo trentuno

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Gioseffi 2008 per un'analisi dei rapporti tra le note probiane e il commento di Servio.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Gioseffi 2009.

volte, in Porfirione ben cinquantasette. Inoltre, in ventinove dei trentuno casi in cui l'espressione è nello Pseudo-Acrone, essa si ritrova, identica o leggermente variata, anche in Porfirione.<sup>9</sup> Per quanto riguarda invece la prima parte dell'annotazione pseudacronea, anche se fosse derivata da Porfirione, ciò non sarebbe molto significativo, in quanto il commentatore avrebbe rielaborato la notizia dal punto di vista formale e l'avrebbe arricchita notevolmente, creando una nota nuova. Possiamo inoltre segnalare che esistono due aspetti comuni all'interpretazione porfirionea e a quella pseudacronea dell'ode I. 37: innanzitutto l'utilizzo anacronistico del titolo di Augusto, di cui si è già detto; in secondo luogo il fatto che gli scolasti non affermino esplicitamente che si sta parlando di una guerra civile. Nel commentare le *Odi*, del resto, l'espressione *bellum civile* è utilizzata da Porfirione soltanto una volta;<sup>10</sup> gli scolasti pseudacronei la inseriscono invece otto volte, ma mai in riferimento al *bellum Actiacum*.<sup>11</sup> Dunque, dal momento che nessuno dei commentatori oraziani definisce esplicitamente tale scontro come guerra civile, si può pensare che fossero convinti che Orazio la presentasse come guerra contro un nemico esterno, l'Egitto di Cleopatra; sicuramente non ritenevano opportuno segnalare ai propri lettori la problematicità di tale definizione.<sup>12</sup> Servio, invece, si rivolge a studenti di livello superiore (o addirittura ad altri maestri, come sostiene Marshall 1997) cui fornisce un'esegesi più appro-

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Schröder 1999, pp. 239–248. In particolare diciassette volte l'espressione pseudacronea è identica a quella porfirionea, mentre le altre dodici volte è utilizzato un verbo differente. I conteggi sono miei, e chiaramente soggetti a errore.

<sup>10</sup> Nella nota *ad carm.* II. 1. 6, in cui Porfirione parla genericamente di *odia belli civilis*.

<sup>11</sup> Si tratta delle seguenti note: *ad carm.* I. 2. 51, in cui si parla della guerra tra Cesare e Pompeo; *ad carm.* I. 14. 1 e I. 14. 2, in cui l'espressione è riferita alla guerra contro Sesto Pompeo; *ad carm.* I. 2. 35; I. 14. 1 e nella nota in esame, in riferimento alla guerra tra Ottaviano e i Cesaricidi; *ad carm.* III. 6. 13 il termine è utilizzato per indicare genericamente le guerre che precedono lo scontro con Cleopatra; *ad carm.* IV. 15. 17 l'espressione è all'interno di una parafrasi, senza un riferimento esplicito.

<sup>12</sup> Non bisogna pensare che le conoscenze degli scolasti oraziani si limitassero a quanto essi dicono nei loro commenti: si tratta, infatti, di *scholia* per studenti di primo livello, a cui i commentatori intendevano trasmettere solo le notizie fondamentali per la comprensione del testo di Orazio.

fondita, dando spazio anche a problematiche più complesse; egli affronta perciò esplicitamente questo problema, proprio nella già citata nota *ad Aen.* VIII. 678:

Sed quia belli ciuilis triumphus turpis uidetur, laborat poeta ut probet iustum bellum fuisse, dicens Augustum esse 'cum patribus populoque penatibus et magnis dis', contra cum Antonio auxilia peregrina et monstruosa Aegypti numina [...]. Vnde etiam de hoc bello egit triumphum: nec enim ciuile putatum est, quod tantummodo Romano duce gestum est, qui et ipse barbarae seruiebat uxori, adeo ut praetoria ei castra concederet, quorum qui potiebatur imperio, ipse uocabat exercitum: unde est illo loco de Cleopatra 'patrio uocat agmina sistro' (Verg. *Aen.* VIII. 694): nam Antonius consulare sibi tantum detinuit imperium, in quo sola est potestas iubendi.

Nel suo commento, però, Servio non si mostra del tutto coerente con quanto affermato nella nota; elencando infatti le guerre civili lo scoliasta inserisce talvolta anche la guerra contro Marco Antonio, come nelle annotazioni *ad Aen.* VI. 832<sup>13</sup> e *ad ecl.* 4. 13.<sup>14</sup>

Dunque Porfirione condivide con gli *scholia* pseudacronei la mancata definizione dello scontro di Azio come guerra civile; tuttavia nel suo commento non c'è traccia di un'interpretazione affettiva dello scoppio del conflitto: essa si trova in Servio, nello pseudo-Probo e nelle *Periochae*, in questi ultimi due casi, però, insieme all'individuazione di altre cause politico-militari. Il commento pseudacroneo appare così molto più vicino a quello di Servio che non a quello di Porfirione, sia nella struttura dell'annotazione, che ricostruisce le varie fasi dello scon-

<sup>13</sup> ADVESCITE BELLA] mire dictum: ab ipsis enim quasi consuetudinem fecit populus Romanus bellorum ciuiliū. Septies enim gesta sunt: [...] mortuo Caesare ab Augusto contra Cassium et Brutum in Philippis, ciuitate Thessaliae; Lucium Antonium in Perusia, Tusciae ciuitate; Sextum Pompeium in Sicilia; Antonium et Cleopatram in Epiro.

<sup>14</sup> Vestigia autem scelerum dicit bella ciuilia, quae gessit Augustus contra Antonium apud Mutinam, contra L. Antonium autem, fratrem Antonii, apud Perusiam; contra Sextum Pompeium, filium Pompei, in freto Siciliensi; contra Brutum et Cassium in Thessalia; contra Antonium et Cleopatram in Epiro apud Actium promuntorium [iuxta Leucaten]. Si noti peraltro che Virgilio, con l'espressione uestigia scelerum, non alludeva certo alla guerra di Azio, che non era ancora stata combattuta all'epoca della stesura delle *Bucoliche*. Vd. Zetzel 1984.

tro, sia nell'interpretare le vicende militari in chiave affettiva. Tale vicinanza è spiegabile ipotizzando che questi commenti risentissero di un ambiente scolastico e culturale comune:<sup>15</sup> gli scoliasti pseudacronei non copiano Servio, viste le differenze contenutistiche e formali tra le annotazioni, ma impostano la loro nota come quella serviana e interpretano la storia con lo stesso metodo e approccio.

Fin qui ho analizzato una nota pseudacronea che mi ha permesso di evidenziare i legami che tale commento ha con Porfirione e Servio; ora, invece, considererò due annotazioni pseudacronee sull'ode i. 37 che mettono in luce un'interpretazione peculiare di questi *scholia*, legata al motivo della lussuria di Cleopatra.<sup>16</sup> La prima è la nota *ad carm.* i. 37. 13:

SOSPES NAVIS AB IGNIBVS] Aut naui qua fugit Cleopatra, aut per allegoriam ostendit Cleopatram primum corporis sui inlecebris Caesarem cepisse, secundum Antonium, Augustum deinde temptasse, sed eum eius uitasse complexus; ideo 'una sospes navis ab ignibus' (*ΑΓαV*).

La corrispondente nota porfirionea recita: *Vna nauis, qua scilicet effugit uicta ab Augusto, sed 'unam nauem' ὑπερβολικῶς dictum accipe.* La prima interpretazione è quella che i moderni commentatori considerano corretta, in quanto riferisce l'espressione oraziana *una sospes navis* alla nave sulla quale Cleopatra fuggì dopo la battaglia di Azio.<sup>17</sup> Tuttavia gli scoliasti pseudacronei danno conto anche di una possibile interpretazione allegorica del passo: l'unica nave che si è salvata dalle fiamme rappresenterebbe Augusto, rimasto illeso dalle mire amorose di Cleopatra, a differenza di Cesare e di Antonio. I commentatori, inoltre, sottolineano fortemente la lussuria della regina, in particolare con il nesso *corporis sui inlecebris*. Porfirione, invece, interpreta il verso in riferimento alla nave su cui Cleopatra fuggì, aggiungendo solo che l'espressione oraziana è iperbolica. Vicino alla nota pseudacronea

<sup>15</sup> La datazione del primo nucleo del commento pseudacroneo è dubbia; Keller 1904 lo data tra il 400 e il 450 d.C., Noske 1969 parla genericamente di V secolo.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Becher 1966 e Rivoltella 2014.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Nisbet – Hubbard 1970, p. 408.

è un passo di Floro, che nell'*Epitome* (II, p. 168. 11-13) parla di un tentativo di corruzione che Cleopatra operò nei confronti di Augusto: *Prior ferrum occupavit Antonius, regina ad pedes Caesaris prouoluta temptavit oculos ducis. Frustra quidem; nam pulchritudo infra pudicitiam principis fuit*. I commentatori pseudacroni potevano conoscere un racconto simile, anche se non necessariamente perché l'avevano letto in Floro, e hanno creato la loro interpretazione del verso in esame su questa base 'storica', partendo in qualche modo dalla convinzione che la lussuria fosse un elemento importante nel ritratto oraziano di Cleopatra.

La stessa situazione caratterizza la nota *ad carm.* I. 37. 21:

FATALE MONSTRVM] '*Fatalem*' dixit aut turpem, unde et prostantes fatales dicuntur, ut est (Lucan. x. 60): '*Roma*no non casta malo', aut uelut monstrum fati sibi reseruatum, aut fato Romanis subiectum (AT&V).

Porfirione *ad loc.* commenta: *Fatale monstrum aut a fato sibi seruatum aut detestabile dictum hoc accipiamus. Quasi decreto fatorum nobis obiectum*. L'annotazione pseudacronica presenta tre interpretazioni del passo oraziano, ma due di esse si trovano anche nel commento porfirioneo: accade spesso, del resto, che nei casi in cui lo Pseudo-Acrone presenta più possibilità introdotte da nessi come *aut... aut, alii... alii, alii... quidam, aliter*, almeno una di queste sia riportata da Porfirione. Ciò che interessa qui è però la terza interpretazione dell'aggettivo *fatalem*: secondo i commentatori pseudacroni, infatti, potrebbe essere ricondotto a *fatales*, termine utilizzato per indicare le prostitute, e dunque rappresenterebbe un'altra allusione alla lussuria di Cleopatra. L'uso sostantivato dell'aggettivo con questo significato è testimoniato soltanto nell'annotazione in esame;<sup>18</sup> esiste tuttavia un parallelo nel profilo di Cleopatra che si legge nel *Liber de uiris illustribus* (86. 2): *Haec tantae libidinis fuit, ut saepe prostituerit, tantae pulchritudinis, ut multi noctem illius morte emerint*. L'anonimo autore dice infatti apertamente che Cleopatra si prostituiva: il fatto che notizie simili si trovino in questo testo e nel commento pseudacronico è sicuramente un segnale di come il *corpus*

<sup>18</sup> Cf. ThLL VI.1, col. 332, 54-55.

pseudacroneo si inserisca a pieno titolo in un mondo scolastico tardoantico, nel quale circolavano ed erano utilizzati manuali storico-biografici di questo tipo. Ma per quale motivo i commentatori pensano che Orazio alluda (in almeno due versi) alla lussuria di Cleopatra? Forse sono indotti a questa interpretazione dalla lettura di Lucano: nel x libro del *Bellum civile*, infatti, Cleopatra è ritratta proprio come una donna lussuriosa, pronta a usare il suo fascino per scopi politici, senza alcuno scrupolo.<sup>19</sup> Nel commento all'ode I. 37, non a caso, gli scolasti pseudacronei inseriscono due citazioni di Lucano, entrambe tratte dal x libro: la prima nella nota *ad carm. I. 37. 7*<sup>20</sup> e la seconda nella nota *ad carm. I. 37. 21*; inoltre, Lucano è l'autore più citato nel commento dopo Virgilio, con cinquantatré citazioni nella sola parte relativa a Orazio lirico.<sup>21</sup> Si tratta peraltro di un'altra caratteristica che avvicina gli *scholia* pseudacronei a Servio: proprio il commentatore virgiliano, infatti, è il primo scoliasta in cui notiamo una forte presenza di citazioni da autori imperiali, in particolare Lucano, Giovenale e Stazio.<sup>22</sup> Porfirione, al contrario, cita Lucano solo due volte, manifestando una netta preferenza per gli autori repubblicani.<sup>23</sup> I commentatori pseudacronei mostrano di conoscere l'opera di Lucano, pertanto potevano avere in mente un ritratto di Cleopatra incentrato sulla lussuria e potevano leggere nello stesso modo il ritratto oraziano della regina, che invece si concentra maggiormente su altri motivi.

<sup>19</sup> Lucan. x. 53-81.

<sup>20</sup> REGINA] *Idest Cleopatra, ut [est]* (Lucan. x. 63): '*Terruit illa suo, si fas, Capitolia sistro*' (AFV).

<sup>21</sup> Infatti, il commento pseudacroneo A' ci è giunto solo per questa parte, che è quindi l'unica sezione dei commenti pseudacronei che può essere datata alla fine del IV-V secolo d.C.

<sup>22</sup> Wessner 1929, Cameron 1964 e Kaster 1978 considerano Servio l'iniziatore di questa tendenza. Vinchesi 1979, invece, pensa che la rinascita dell'interesse per gli autori imperiali sia una caratteristica fondamentale del V secolo, di cui Servio sarebbe l'esempio più evidente; la stessa opinione in Pellizzari 2003.

<sup>23</sup> Vd. Mastellone Iovane 1998 e Diederich 1999.

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### *Abstract*

Pseudo-Acronian scholia on *carm.* I. 37 share contents and exegetical approach with the commentaries of Porphyrio and Servius and other texts dating from the fourth to fifth century. Neither pseudo-Acro nor Porphyrio define the *bellum Actiacum* as an external or civil war; in addition, they refer the title *Augustus* to Octavian anachronistically. Pseudo-Acro's note on *carm.* I. 37. 1 has the same structure as the Servian note on *Aen.* VIII. 678 concerning the same theme, namely *bellum Actiacum*; both scholia offer a similar interpretation of the reasons for the war, described as emotional and personal rather than political and military. On the contrary, in two notes (*carm.* I. 37. 13 and 21), pseudo-Acro explains certain Horatian expressions as being references to the lustfulness of Cleopatra. This interpretation is not shared by Servius or Porphyrio, but is likely to reflect the influence of Lucanus (x. 53-81); comparable information is found in *Periochae* and *Liber de viris illustribus*, both composed in the same centuries as the first section of the pseudo-Acronian commentary.



## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANRW	= Hildegard Temporini – Wolfgang Haase (hrsg. von), <i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt</i> , Berlin – New York 1972–.
CCCM	= <i>Corpus Christianorum. Continuatio Medievalis</i> , Turnhout 1966–.
CCSL	= <i>Corpus Christianorum. Series Latina</i> , Turnhout 1954–.
CIL	= <i>Corpus Inscriptionum Latinorum</i> , Berlin 1863–.
DNP	= Hubert Cancik – Helmuth Schneider (hrsg. von), <i>Der neue Pauly. Enzyklopädie der Antike</i> , Stuttgart 1996–2003.
EV	= <i>Enciclopedia Virgiliana</i> , Roma 1984–1991.
ILS	= <i>Inscriptiones Latinae selectae</i> , edidit Hermannus Dessau, Berolini 1892–1916 (repr. 1962).
LIMC	= <i>Lexicon iconographicum Mythologiae classicae</i> , Zürich – München – Düsseldorf 1981–2009.
MGH AA	= <i>Monumenta Germaniae historica. Auctores antiquissimi</i> , Berolini 1877–1919.
MGH PLAC	= <i>Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Poetae Latini aevi Ca-</i> <i>rolini</i> , Berolini 1881–1923.
MGH SRG	= <i>Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Scriptorum rerum Ger-</i> <i>manicarum in usum scholarum separatim editi</i> , Hanno- verae 1871–2007.
MGH SS	= <i>Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Scriptores (in Folio)</i> , Hannoverae 1826–2009.
PCBE	= <i>Prosopographie chrétienne du Bas-Empire</i> , Paris 1982–.
PL	= Jacques-Paul Migne, <i>Patrologiae Latinae cursus comple-</i> <i>tus</i> , Parisiis 1844–1855.

# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

PLRE	= Arnold H. M. Jones – John R. Martindale – John Morris, <i>The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire</i> , Cambridge 1971–1992.
RAC	= <i>Reallexicon für Antike und Christentum. Sachwörterbuch zur Auseinandersetzung des Christentum mit der Antiken Welt</i> , Stuttgart 1950–.
RE	= <i>Real-Encyclopädie der klassischen Altertumswissenschaft</i> , Stuttgart 1893–.
Roscher	= Wilhelm H. Roscher, <i>Ausführliches Lexicon der Griechischen und Römischen Mythologie</i> , Leipzig 1884–1937 (repr. Hildesheim 1965–1977).
SCh	= <i>Sources Chrétiennes</i> , Paris 1941–.
SL	= Democrito, <i>Raccolta dei frammenti</i> , interpretazione e commentario di Salomon Luria, It. transl., Milano 2007 ( <i>Democritea</i> , collegit emendavit interpretatus est Salomo Luria, Leningrado 1970).
ThLL	= <i>Thesaurus Linguae Latinae</i> , Lipsiae 1900–.

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